

THE MUSLIM WORLD

A JOURNAL DEVOTED TO THE STUDY OF ISLAM AND CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RELATIONSHIP IN PAST AND PRESENT

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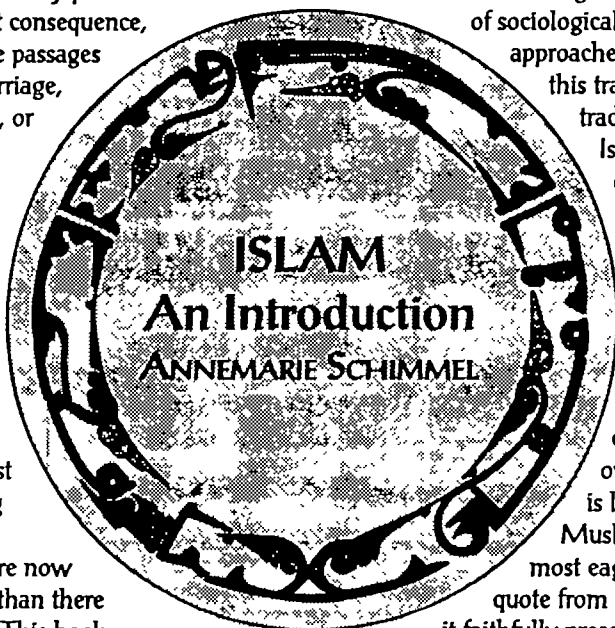
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THE MUSLIM WORLD

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INTER-RELIGIOUS CONFLICT AND THE VOYAGES OF COLUMBUS

The beginning and the end of the Enterprise [of the Indies] was the increase and glory of the Christian Religion.

Christopher Columbus
Diario of the First Voyage
November 27, 1492

Most accounts of the New World and its discovery do not begin with the struggles of Christendom against Islam and Judaism. Such religious conflicts seem to belong to the Middle Ages, while the European discovery of the New World seems very much a part of modernity. Furthermore, when American school children are introduced to the figure of Columbus, they usually meet a secular hero: a budding scientist, a brilliant navigator, and a man of courage who dared to sail across the unknown sea to its limits. Religious matters did not appear to be prominent concerns for him or his sponsors. Instead, school children were often taught that the contemporaries of Columbus believed the world was flat, with a slight lip on the edge to hold the oceans in, somewhat like a saucer, and that only Columbus was modern and scientific enough to know the world was actually round.

Without elaboration, I would like to make three points that should be sufficient to dismiss the American myth of Columbus as a modern, secular, and scientific man.

First, contemporaries of Columbus did not believe the world was flat. There may have been some peasant somewhere who held that view, but medieval scientists, experienced seamen, and trusted advisors in the courts of European Monarchs agreed that the earth was a globe.¹

Second, Columbus was most definitely not a Renaissance scientist. This is apparent from his selection of sources and his lack of commitment to any form of scientific thought. The so-called scientific sources that Columbus relied upon were 250 years old by the time he used them. Roger Bacon, a thirteenth century Franciscan, wrote the scientific source which Columbus valued most highly for calculating the distance between the continents of Asia and Europe. Bacon had described the ocean between

¹ For the origins of the flat earth theory as part of the "scientific Columbus" myth, see Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Inventing the Flat Earth: Columbus and Modern Historians* (New York: Praeger, 1991).

Western Europe and "Furthest India" (or China) as "a small sea" (*mare parvum*).² By further decreasing Bacon's already shrunken sea, Columbus concluded that the archipelago off the coast of China was only a 2500 mile voyage from the Canary Islands off the coast of Africa: approximately one-quarter of the actual distance.

In addition, there is no evidence to suggest that Columbus took any scientific procedures all that seriously. He described his voyage as "a miracle," the result of a Divine revelation to him in accordance with the prophecies of Isaiah and other Scriptures, and not as a product of mathematical calculations, cosmological theory, map-making, or any other scientific mode of reasoning. In fact, Columbus had not benefited from a Renaissance education in his home country of Italy. He was illiterate until an adult in Portugal and Spain, and his own contacts with Renaissance centers of learning, such as Florence, were extremely limited. However, as shown below, he had immersed himself in medieval Franciscan piety, and this - not science - he took very seriously.

Third, the primary motive for making the voyage was not the advancement of scientific knowledge, the development of trade, or the emergence of a capitalist economy in Spain. Such motives make sense to us, as part of our modern world, but they were not very prominent among Spanish intelligentsia at the end of the fifteenth century. At this time in Spain, the overriding concern was the imminent end of the world, as this apocalyptic belief had been formulated by Spanish Franciscans. Columbus himself expected the end of history about 160 years after his first voyage. As if this expectation of the End were not sufficient, Columbus and his sponsors also believed that God had given Spain the task of completing the unfinished business of salvation before the End could occur. Establishing the absolute supremacy of Christianity over Islam and Judaism was a major part of Spain's God-given mission. In relation to this cosmic and apocalyptic drama, mundane considerations, such as scientific knowledge or trade or the acquisition of wealth for a new capitalist economy, receded into the background. Indeed, Spain's economy was so thoroughly feudal that the gold acquired from the New World merely permitted the prolongation of her archaic medieval system long after England and France had begun to develop capitalist structures.

In brief, then, while it is true that our modern Western world is inconceivable apart from the voyages of Columbus, the modernity that resulted from these voyages is itself an accidental by-product. The goal of the voyages themselves, for Columbus and his sponsors, was that of winning the world-

² Bacon's texts originally appeared in *Opus Majus*, Volume I, Part IV Mathematics [Robert Belle Burke (trans.), *The Opus Majus of Roger Bacon* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania, 1928), pp. 311-316]. Columbus read his Bacon texts in the quasi-encyclopedia collection of medieval sources, *Imago Mundi* (especially chapter 12), collected, edited, and with commentary by Cardinal Pierre d'Ailly.

wide religious and political hegemony of Christendom, thereby preparing the world for the anticipated drama of the End Time.

"The Conquest of Jerusalem" (Mexico, 1537)

A religious pageant, first performed in Mexico in the year 1537, reveals the close connection between the discovery of New Spain (Mexico) and the Christian struggle with Islam. Titled "The Conquest of Jerusalem," this pageant was performed by a cast of Mexican Indians recently converted to Christianity. Its script was written by Spanish Franciscan missionaries.³

The pageant begins with a series of battles between the armies of European Christians and Turkish Muslims. In each of their onslaughts against the walls of Jerusalem, European troops were repeatedly defeated by the Muslim defenders of the Holy City. The first act ends on this discouraging note.

Up to this point, the pageant was symbolically accurate in its portrayal of medieval military history. Beginning in the mid-twelfth century, Christian forces in Palestine suffered a series of defeats by their Muslim rivals. Even worse, from a European point of view, not only did the Christians lose control of the so-called "Kingdom of Jerusalem," but the military might of Islam expanded beyond Palestine, conquering Constantinople in 1453, then winning naval supremacy in the Eastern Mediterranean and invading eastern Europe. In the medieval military struggle between Christian and Islamic forces, the Christians were almost always on the losing side of the battle. That is the situation as expressed in the first act of this pageant.

The second act portrays a sudden turn in the struggle between these contending armies. In one battle scene after another, Christian forces defeat their Muslim enemies. In part, these Christian victories were a result of God's intervention: a miracle was conveniently inserted into the battle action to convert any apparent loss into a triumph. In part, the dramatized new supremacy of Christian forces was made possible by the reinforcements from Spain and from New Spain: that is, the newly converted Indians of Mexico portrayed themselves as soldiers locked in fierce combat with a Muslim enemy whom they never knew. In contrast with the half-hearted efforts of the British and French troops defeated in the first act, the new forces from Spain and New Spain struggled with great zeal. The message of this second act is clear. God had given up on the older European nations, such as England and France, to win back the Holy Land. God now called upon the newly-united nation of Spain, and the Spanish New World, to initiate a new stage in the Christian

³ For an account of this pageant, see Delno C. West, "Medieval Ideas of Apocalyptic Mission and the Early Franciscans in Mexico," *The Americas: A Quarterly review of Inter-American Cultural History* (45:1989), pp. 293ff.

struggle with Islam. This new age is one marked by Christian victories, not defeats.

In this second act, the pageant reflects a mixture of the recent past and future hopes. Granada, the last stronghold of Islam on the Iberian Peninsula, had in fact fallen to Spanish forces in January 1492. Not only was Columbus there to witness the surrender of the Moors to Ferdinand and Isabella, but he began the account of his first voyage with his memory of this scene of Islamic defeat.

This present year of 1492, after Your Highnesses had brought to an end the war with the Moors who ruled in Europe and had concluded the war in the very great city of Granada, where this present year on the second day of the month of January I saw the Royal Standards of Your Highnesses placed by force of arms on the towers of the Alhambra. . . and I saw the Moorish King come out to the gate of the city and kiss the Royal Hands of Your Highnesses and of the Prince my Lord.⁴

For Columbus, and for many others in Spain, the defeat of Islamic forces at Granada was not the end of Christian-Muslim wars, but rather the beginning of a New Crusade, a Final Crusade to be led by Spain for the liberation of the Holy City, Jerusalem. The conquest of Granada was also a sign of God's direct action on behalf of this Christian cause. If Spain had already defeated Islam at the western end of the Mediterranean, it would be but a short time until Spain - with the help of God and resources from the New World - also defeated Islam at the eastern end of the Mediterranean. The second act portrays both the remembered victory at Granada and the anticipated conquest of Jerusalem.

The pageant, however, did not end with the defeat of Islamic armies. In the final act, a Mexican Indian dressed in the regalia of the Holy Roman Emperor portrayed King Charles of Spain. As soon as he appeared on stage, all the Turkish soldiers who had survived the previous battle scenes assembled before His Royal Majesty, dropped on one knee, offered their surrender, and pledged their loyalty to fight for him and his cause. Then, after this surrender scene, from the opposite side of the stage appeared His Holiness, the Pope, a role played by another Mexican. The same Turkish soldiers now turned towards the Holy Father, fell to both knees, and asked the Pope to baptize them as Christians. The Pope granted their request, and baptized them en masse. At this point, with the conversion of the conquered Muslims, this Indian pageant of 1537 came to an end.

Ever since I first read the story of this pageant, I have tried to imagine how the new Mexican converts could make any sense of a European struggle with

⁴ Oliver Dunn and James E. Kelley, Jr., *The Diario of Christopher Columbus's First Voyage to America 1492-1493*, Bi-lingual edition (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989), p. 17.

• All page citations from the *Diario* refer to this edition.

Islam which was so distant from their land and so alien to their history. I suspect, however, that events of this third act were quite familiar to them. Like the Turkish soldiers portrayed in this pageant, the Mexican actors had also been conquered, transferred their loyalty from the Mexican king to a new King across the sea, and finally, relinquished their religion in order to be baptized and become Christians. Within the past fifteen years, they had themselves experienced the same mixture of war, politics, and religious conversion.

For the missionaries who wrote this script, Jerusalem and New Spain were not unrelated geographical territories, but united in one eschatological drama, designed by God and enacted by Spain.

The Edict of Expulsion (March 30, 1492)

On March 30, 1492 Ferdinand and Isabella issued their Edict of Expulsion. All Jews who had not converted to Christianity were to be expelled from Spanish territory. Within a period of less than three months, Ferdinand and Isabella had accepted the surrender of the Moors, decided to send Columbus on his voyage to India, and ordered all Jews to leave Spain. Columbus did not miss the connection between the religious policies of Spain at home, and the decision to send him to India. As he wrote in the Prologue to his *Diario*:

Your Highnesses, as Catholic Christians and Princes, lovers and promoters of the Holy Christian Faith, and enemies of the false doctrine of Mahomet and of all idolatries and heresies, you decided to send me to the said regions of India to see the said princes and the peoples and the lands ...and to see how their conversion to our Holy Faith might be undertaken.... So, after having expelled all the Jews from all of your Kingdoms and Dominions, in the same month of January, your Highnesses commanded me to go with a suitable fleet to the said regions of India (*Diario*, 19).

Columbus was incorrect in his dating of the Edict of Expulsion: it was March 30, 1492, not January, 1492. But he was perceptive in recognizing the connection between the new religious policies of Spain at home and the purpose of his voyage to the Indies. His task was to determine how the people of "furthest India" (i.e., medieval Cathay or contemporary China) could be converted to Christianity. This global missionary endeavor was part and parcel of a religious drama which included the expulsion of the Jews from Spain, the defeat of the Moors in Spain, and the conquest of Jerusalem.

And so I hope in Our Lord that Your Highnesses, with much diligence, will decide to send such persons [to the Indies] in order to bring to the Church such great nations and to convert them, just as you have destroyed

those that did not want to confess the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit (*Diario*, 141).

Just as Ferdinand and Isabella had established a sovereign Christendom in Spain, purified of any alien Jewish believers or Islamic power, so Columbus prepared the way for future missionaries to create a new Christendom in Asia, a kingdom of converts whose hegemony in the "three Indias" would correspond with the purified Christendom of Spain. From an apocalyptic perspective, such a total transformation of the religious condition of all humanity seemed not only plausible, but necessary.

The destruction of the Jewish community in Spain was an extraordinary loss for medieval Judaism. No other Jewish community in Europe was as strong, in its intellectual and spiritual resources, as ancient in its residency, and as closely linked with both Christian and Islamic societies as the Jews of Spain. The elimination of such a community seemed impossible.

However, it did happen. August 3, 1492 was the last date by which the unconverted Jews of Spain had to leave. That was also the date on which Columbus sailed his small fleet of three ships out of the harbor at Palos, Spain. According to the later testimony of his crew, the ship carrying the last Jewish emigrés out of Spain left from the same port on the same morning tide as did Columbus.

While Columbus gave his blessing to the Edict of Expulsion, and claimed it as a religious policy consistent with the purposes of his voyage, he also benefitted directly from the economic consequences of that Edict. Jewish families expelled in 1492 were not allowed to take any valuables with them. As a result, many entrusted their properties, jewels, and other goods to Spanish friends and/or fellow Jews who had converted to Christianity. The forced emigrés held out the hope of sometime returning to reclaim their possessions.

However, when Columbus returned to Spain after the first voyage, his report was sufficiently enthusiastic to persuade the Sovereigns to outfit immediately a second fleet. Unlike the first voyage of three ships, this one was to be much more costly: seventeen ships loaded with soldiers, priests, and settlers, together with the supplies necessary for beginning a new colony, converting the heathen, and recovering the gold of the Indies. A short time after this decision was made, the Sovereigns of Spain proclaimed the confiscation of all Jewish properties that had been left in the care of friends or relatives by the families expelled in 1492. In good part, the wealth confiscated from the Jews expelled in 1492 financed Columbus's second voyage in 1493. While Jewish people had suffered persecution sporadically throughout the Middle Ages, they had not been targeted by church or state as prime subjects for conversion. During most of the Middle Ages, the church had followed the teachings of Augustine concerning the Jews: namely, the conversion of the Jews was a matter to be left to the hand of God for the end of history; it was not the business of

the historical church to bring about the conversion of the Jews.⁵ However, in Spain, as early as the thirteenth century, the apocalyptic theology of the Franciscans and Dominicans had become sufficiently strong to alter this timetable. According to their new teaching, the church now lived so close to the End of history that the conversion of the Jews could no longer be delayed. Not only did the church press the Jewish population to convert to Christianity, but the orthodoxy of these *conversos* was the special target of the Spanish Inquisition. The expulsion of the Jews in 1492 and confiscation of their property in 1493 grew out of these apocalyptic expectations.

Book of Prophecies (1501-1502)

While the historical causes of late fifteenth century Christian hostility to Islam and Judaism are too numerous to be considered here, the most important theological factors can be noted. The theological writings of Columbus himself offer the most revealing body of literature, while the teachings and devotional practices of his Spanish Franciscan supporters disclose the larger social and cultural context for his thought.

Columbus was an amateur theologian throughout his life. In texts he read before the first voyage, his marginal hand-written notes show his preoccupation with apocalyptic matters of faith.⁶ His logs and correspondence from the several voyages are heavily laden with his piety and his beliefs concerning the End Time. He records several direct experiences of God, including a lengthy address delivered to him during a hopeless situation of the fourth voyage. The most explicitly theological of his writings, however, is the *Book of Prophecies* composed in the years 1501-1502.

In this volume, Columbus, with the assistance of an ecclesiastical friend, assembled a broad mixture of "prophecies" from biblical, classical, and medieval sources. His lengthy introduction took the form of a letter to the King and Queen of Spain in which he recounted the many achievements of his life. Not only had he been at sea since a very early age, but he had covered as much of the earth's oceans as could be sailed in his day. He was gifted in the many skills of the mariner's craft, with an "adequate understanding" of astronomy, geometry, and arithmetic, and "the mental capacity and manual skill" to draft

⁵ Jeremy Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews: the Evolution of Medieval Anti-Judaism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982).

⁶ For an analysis of these marginal notes and their apocalyptic contents, see Pauline Moffitt Watts, "Prophecy and Discovery: On the Spiritual Origins of Christopher Columbus's 'Enterprise of the Indies,'" *American Historical Review*, 90 (1985): 73-102. For a reproduction of the notes (in Latin with French translation) from one of Columbus's volumes, see Edmund Buron (ed.), *Imago Mundi de Pierre d'Ailly*, (Paris: Masisonnueve, 1930)

spherical maps.⁷ In addition, he had for many years "studied all kinds of texts," especially in subjects such as geography and history.⁸

Having recited his many talents, he then disavowed them. He had not himself conceived of the plan of sailing westward to reach the East. Rather,

the Lord opened my mind to the fact that it would be possible to sail from here to the Indies. All the sciences which I mentioned above were of no use to me. Quotations of learned opinion were of no help. Who can doubt that this fire [which burned within me] was not merely mine, but also of the Holy Spirit... urging me to press forward.... Already I pointed out that for the execution of the journey to the Indies I was not aided by intelligence, by mathematics or by maps. It was simply the fulfillment of what Isaiah had prophesied, and this is what I desire to write in this book.⁹

And that was, in part, what he did write in his book. He wanted the King and Queen to understand that his voyage to the Indies did not issue from his reason and will, but was "something clearly miraculous" to fulfill what "our Redeemer Jesus Christ had said."¹⁰ The selections from the Scriptures which followed this introduction were intended to validate its claim. The Bible in general, and Isaiah in particular, had foretold the role of Columbus in opening the Sea of Darkness so that the nations on its other side could hear the Gospel.

Columbus next explained the eschatological significance of this evangelical voyage. The End of history was only about one hundred and fifty years away. He noted that his concern with the End was not peculiar to himself: the "prophets of the Old Testament" and "our Savior Jesus Christ" testified that "this world must come to an end."¹¹ Matthew, Mark, and Luke had given "signs concerning the time when this must happen." Saint Augustine said the End would occur sometime in the seventh millennium after the creation of the world and Cardinal Pierre d'Ailly calculated this to happen within a century and a half.¹²

However, the End could not occur until all prophecies had been fulfilled. Our Savior said that before the consummation of this world, first must be fulfilled all the things that were written by the prophets.¹³

⁷ Delno C. West and August Kling (trans. and eds), *The Libro de las profecias of Christopher Columbus* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1991), p. 105.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*, 105, 111.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 107.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*, 109.

While "by far the greatest portion of the prophecies of the Holy Scripture has already been fulfilled," the fulfillment of one of these prophecies had only just begun, and another was yet to come.¹⁴ Completing these two unfulfilled prophecies became a Divine obsession for Columbus.

Columbus believed that God had assigned to him these two unfinished tasks of salvation history in preparation for the End: (1) the discovery of a sea route to the Indies necessary to accomplish the conversion of the heathen and (2) the acquisition of sufficient gold from the Indies for a Final Crusade. To understand how these two tasks could become the driving force of Columbus's voyages, we need first to examine his relation to the Spanish Franciscans and their theology.

Columbus, Spanish Franciscans, and Their Salvation Story

The unusual theology which shaped the self-understanding of Columbus originated in the Spanish Franciscan movement. He associated himself with the community at Santa Maria de la Rábida. When Columbus first arrived in Spain, at the port of Palos in the summer of 1485, he went directly to this monastery, and lived there for almost six months. When he returned from the first voyage, he again went first to La Rábida for several weeks, before proceeding to meet the King and Queen. The friars there not only befriended him, but took up his cause as their own. Their scientific and political support played a powerful role in winning the Sovereign's decision to fund the "Enterprise of the Indies".¹⁵

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Father Antonio de Marchena, head of the Franciscan Custody of Seville, was the only Spanish astronomer/cosmologist who provided scientific support for Columbus's proposal. He wrote letters on his behalf to a variety of parties, including Hernando de Talavera, chair of the Royal Commission appointed to review Columbus's proposal. Father Juan Pérez was the primary political mediator between Columbus and the Sovereigns and between Columbus and the seamen of Palos, Spain. As Columbus was about to leave Spain, after his proposal had been turned down, Pérez detained him at La Rábida until he could write the queen, requesting yet another hearing. Pérez, formerly in the Queen's service, was called to that hearing (not Columbus), and he won a positive (but not final) decision. Four months later, in late April, 1492, Pérez represented Columbus in negotiating his contract with the Crown, and won a package of rewards far more lucrative than had been promised any explorer of that era. A month later, in late May, 1492, Pérez represented the Crown in notifying the citizens of Palos that they were expected to provide two caravels for the fleet of Columbus in payment for a fishing penalty. During this same period of time, he was persuading the best seamen of Palos to overcome their fear of a voyage crossing the Sea of Darkness. Thursday, August 2, 1492 was the festival of *Nuestra Señora de los Angeles*, the patroness of La Rábida, Columbus's fleet sailed the morning after this celebration. Pérez presided at the celebratory Mass on August 2 and the next morning he joined the crew in a procession to their ships, offering a final blessing for the voyage. On the second voyage, Pérez, along with at least three other Franciscans, joined Columbus, though little is known of his life in the Indies. Without the intervention of these high-ranking and politically effective Franciscans, a Spanish sponsored voyage seems unlikely. For sources on the contribution of Spanish Franciscans to the voyage of 1492, see Francis Borgia Steck, O. F. M.,

More important still, these Franciscans—and the unknown others who first directed him to this monastery—provided the community of believers formative for his religious life. Indeed, it is no longer possible to ignore the fact that Columbus was himself a “Franciscan,” in some sense of that term. A variety of his behaviors reflected his Franciscan identity.

His contemporaries were in agreement concerning his piety. In the discipline and intensity of his worship and prayer life, he was an unusual man, even when compared with other religious laymen of his time. His participation in worship was almost compulsive; or, in the language of his son, “he was so strict in matters of religion that he might have been taken for a member of a religious order”.¹⁶ He would not miss Sunday Mass, and attended as many week-day services as possible. Ship-life under Columbus was punctuated by the daily offices of prayer. In a letter recounting his deprivations while stranded for a year on a Jamaican beach, he called attention in particular to the lack of sacraments. In his private prayers, he was so intense that it was almost impossible to disturb him. A local chief and fifty followers once arrived unexpectedly on the deck of his ship; while they made much noise, they went unnoticed by Columbus, secluded in his cabin praying. In his speech, his habits were definitely not those of the typical foul-mouthed ship captain; *San Fernando* was his worst profanity.

In speaking of God, Columbus, like the Franciscan friars, often referred to the Holy Trinity or the Holy Spirit. For Spanish Franciscans and Columbus, this nomenclature held a special meaning: they believed that they lived in the Third, and Final, Age of history. According to Joachim of Fiore, after the First Age of the Father and the Second of the Son came the Third Age of the Spirit. The Holy Trinity did not signify the eternal name of God, but a changing procession of divine persons, culminating in the experiential immediacy of the Spirit. Columbus dedicated his third voyage to the Holy Trinity. The first sign of land he saw displayed three mountains, a miraculous vindication of the Spirit, and so he named that island Trinidad.

The signature he adopted in 1502 reflected both his devotion to the Trinity and his own self-identity as the bearer of Christ across the waters.

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“Christopher Columbus and the Franciscans,” *The Americas. A Quarterly Review of Inter-American Cultural History* 3: (1946) 324-328; also, later references to the work of Alain Milhou and Delno C. West.

¹⁶ Benjamin Keen (trans.), *The Life of the Admiral Christopher Columbus by His Son Ferdinand* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University, 1959), p. 9.

While the meaning of the characters in the top three rows is not known, their pyramidal shape symbolized the Trinity. The first three letters of the bottom line are Greek: Chi, Rho, and Omicron - a standard medieval abbreviation for *Christum*. The Latin "FERENS" refers to the legend of St. Christopher who ferries the Christ across the dangerous waters. Columbus, in the Franciscan story of faith, became the Christ-Bearer.

Further evidence of Columbus's Franciscan affiliation is that he occasionally appeared in the traditional brown Franciscan robe. Two persons who knew Columbus well reported seeing him dressed in a robe that was unmistakably Franciscan. Andrés Bernáldez, an historian and churchman with whom Columbus stayed, reported that he

arrived in Castile in the month of June, 1496 dressed as an Observantine Friar of the Order of St. Francis and resembling one in appearance, little less than in his dress, with the cord of the Order, which he wore for devotion.¹⁷

Bartolomé de las Casas, editor of the journals of Columbus, made the same claim independently in his *Historia de las Indias*.¹⁸ Legend has it that Columbus was even buried in that Franciscan robe.

In light of this evidence, many scholars have concluded that Columbus was a Franciscan Tertiary, that is a member of the Third Order of Franciscans, laypersons who lived outside the cloister. Father Francis Steck, for example, claims that

association with the friars, even to the extent of joining the Third Order of Saint Francis, not only molded the spiritual life of Columbus but also gave a spiritual turn to his enterprise. That he was a Franciscan Tertiary can no longer be doubted.¹⁹

Alain Milhou, a contemporary Spanish scholar of Columbus, notes that no conclusive piece of evidence has yet surfaced to prove Columbus was a Franciscan: e.g., a Franciscan membership list with the name of Columbus (or Colón). However, in Milhou's judgment, the circumstantial evidence is so strong as to make irrelevant the absence of an official record. Columbus's spirituality

¹⁷ Cited in Delno C. West, "Introduction," *The Libro de las*

profecías of Christopher Columbus (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1991), p. 58

¹⁸ Cited in Francis Borgia Steck, "Christopher Columbus and the Franciscans," *The Americas A Quarterly Review of Inter-American Cultural History* (3 1946), p. 327 Las Casas is best known as "Protector of the Indians," a title he earned because of his life-long struggle to win Spanish legislation prohibiting the most cruel forms of torture, murder, and economic exploitation in the New World. Gustavo Gutiérrez named his center in Lima, Peru after Las Casas, and has completed the first of a four volume study of his life and thought.

¹⁹ Ibid.

and the identity he claimed in the Franciscan salvation story make sense only if he was a Tertiary.²⁰

As known and appropriated by Columbus, the Franciscan version of the Christian salvation story was a complex synthesis of three disparate sources. The Franciscan Order, both its history and traditions, provided two of its most prominent themes.

Franciscans expected members of their order to preach the Gospel to peoples living beyond the boundaries of Christendom, insofar as this was possible. By journeying to North Africa and Syria-Palestine, St. Francis himself had initiated the foreign missions of the Order.²¹ The Franciscan Rule of 1223, normative for the Observantine movement of which La Rábida was a part, also recognized the need to preach Christ in other countries. Indeed, by the 1480's, missionary activity to the newly discovered lands in Africa and the Atlantic Islands had their center at the great convent of La Rábida.²²

The Franciscans had developed their most distant and successful missions in China during the early fourteenth century. They had built a cathedral in the capital; one of their Order had been installed as archbishop there in 1307; and six other Franciscans, consecrated as bishops, led congregations in other cities of China.²³ While European Christians in the first half of the fourteenth century suddenly lost contact with the missions in China, the Franciscans did not forget them.²⁴ Hence, members of the Order used their scientific authority

²⁰ Alain Milhou, *Colón y su mentalidad mesiánica en el ambiente franciscanista español* (Valladolid: Casa-Museo de Colón, 1983), pp. 42-51.

²¹ For the Franciscan missions beyond Christendom and their special responsibilities in the Holy Land, see John R. H. Moorman, *A History of the Franciscan Order from its Origins to 1517* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968).

²² Delno C. West, "Medieval Ideas of Apocalyptic Mission and the Early Franciscans in Mexico." *The Americas: A Quarterly Review of Inter-American Cultural History* (45:1989), p. 294.

²³ While it seems likely that most, if not all, of the Christian converts attracted to the Franciscan missions in China were not Han Chinese, but from the many other ethnic groups working in China during the Mongol period, European Christians in general, and Franciscans in particular, could not forget the days when they had an archbishop and cathedral in the capital of Cathay. To a high degree, the viability of these missions was dependent upon a series of Great Khans (successors of Genghis Khan) who ruled the Mongol Empire from its capital in China (medieval Cathay) from 1275 to 1368. The Khans practiced religious toleration and, after Kubilai, provided financial and political support for the Latin form of Christian missions in China, as well as the more numerous Nestorian churches. Marco Polo reported on the Khan's "Bureau for Christian Affairs," including his success in arranging for the inclusion of an ancient Jewish community ("they possessed books [which included] the words of the psalter") under the protection of this Bureau.

²⁴ In 1368, the Ming Dynasty defeated their Mongol predecessors. As rulers of China, the new Ming leaders proceeded to close churches and evict Christians. In the late fifteenth century, however, Europeans still did not know that the Yüan (Mongol) dynasty had fallen in 1368. Hence, Columbus sailed from Spain for "the lands of India [ruled by the] 'Grand Khan'" (*Diario*, 17). He carried with him a diplomatic letter from the King and Queen of Spain introducing him to the Great Khan and devoted most of his first month in the Indies to finding the Great Khan and delivering this diplomatic letter. On October 21, "I have already decided to go to the mainland and to the city of Quinsay [a large port in southern China] and to give Your Highnesses' letters to the Grand Khan and to ask for, and to come with, a reply" (*Diario*, 109). By November 2, he had decided that Cuba was not an island, but the mainland. He also believed that one of the Cuban Indians told him that the

and political influence in the Court to win support for Columbus's voyage to Cathay. From a Franciscan point of view, the voyage held the promise of resuming their missions in China, as well as continuing their diplomatic efforts to forge a political-military alliance with the Mongols against the Muslims.²⁵ Hopes for the conversion of the Khan, and all his peoples, remained alive in Europe long after the fall of the Khans in China.²⁶

Franciscans also were responsible for the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem and for other Christian shrines in Palestine. Shortly after St. Francis went to Syria and Palestine, the Latin Church named his Order as custodian of the Holy Sepulchre and other sacred buildings in the Holy Land. Franciscans also provided hospitality for Western pilgrims to Palestine. Not surprisingly, the Franciscans advocated a crusade to restore Jerusalem to Christian hands.

The dual goals of these Franciscans—to convert and to conquer—were made more urgent by the eschatological theology of the century old Observantine reform movement. Observantine friaries adopted for themselves the austere life of poverty, humility, and renunciation as stated in the Franciscan Rule of 1223 and exemplified in the life of St. Francis. Santa Maria de la Rábida joined the reform movement in 1412 and the Guardian there, Father Juan

king of this land lived forty miles inland. So informed, Columbus dispatched a diplomatic party of four to the Great Khan. Laden with Latin passport, Latin letter of introduction from Ferdinand and Isabella, and royal gift, and led by one Spaniard who "had been a Jew and knew, he says, Hebrew and Chaldean [Aramaic] and even a bit of Arabic" and a second Spaniard who had once visited the court of an African king, the party of two Spaniards and two island men trudged into the interior of Cuba to make their diplomatic presentation. Five days later, they returned. Instead of visiting the imperial court of the Great Khan as described by Marco Polo, they had found only a village of fifty palm-thatched huts (*Diario*, 129).

²⁵ For the writings by Franciscans of their early diplomatic journeys to the Khans and subsequent missionary work in Cathay, see Christopher Dawson (trans. and ed.), *The Mongol Mission. Narratives and Letters of the Franciscan Missionaries in Mongolia and China in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1970). Of the several Khans, Hülegü, Il-Khan of Persia and brother of Mönke Khan and Kubilai Khan, became most famous in Europe for his military exploits against Islamic states. Christians loved to retell the story of his destruction of Baghdad in 1258, especially his murder of the Caliph. Columbus was familiar with at least two versions of this gory tale: one from *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville* and a second from Roger Bacon's *Opus Majus* as reproduced in *Imago Mundi*. Hülegü also led the only joint Mongol-Christian "Crusade" marked by any military success. In 1259-60, Christians from Armenia and Mongol forces destroyed Aleppo and won the surrender of Damascus. The Sultan of Egypt unravelled both of these victories in 1260, when Hülegü had to return to Karakorum, Mongolia to settle the succession of his deceased brother, Mönke.

²⁶ Because of the Khans' military victories against Islamic Caliphate, their love of religious rituals and God-talk, and the large number of Nestorian Christians who manned their civil service, they appeared in European literature as if they were closet Christians. Marco Polo, the most important single source for Columbus's voyage, depicted Kubilai Khan as a near-Christian in quest of conversion: he wanted to be persuaded of Christian truth so that he could convert, but the Pope never sent the "one hundred learned men" he requested. In fact, the first of the Franciscan missionaries to Cathay arrived shortly after the departure of Marco Polo and the death of Kubilai Khan. Kubilai Khan, and all his successors, were never Christians, of either the Latin or Nestorian church, but Buddhists of the Lamaist or Tibetan school [René Grousset, *The Empire of the Steppes* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1970), pp. 297-300].

Pérez—an ally of Columbus and a companion on the second voyage—was a leading spokesman of the Observantine reformers in Spain.²⁷ These Reformed Franciscans had an affinity for the apocalyptic writings of their predecessors, the Spiritual Franciscans, who had been condemned as heretics. While the Observantines did not preserve the doctrinal errors or extreme behaviors of the Spiritual Franciscans—for example, the identification of the Pope with the Anti-Christ—they maintained and thereby legitimized other theological themes of their more radical ancestors. For instance, like Joachim of Fiore and his followers, the Observantine friars identified themselves with a spiritual community of God's elect as the agents of transition into the New Age.²⁸

The Franciscans' salvation story also drew upon Spanish nationalism. The kingdoms of Aragon and Castile had been united; their monarchs had been named "Catholic Kings" by the Pope and the armies of Spain had defeated their Muslim enemies. For the poets and visionaries of Spain, such a sequence of events transcended the realm of politics; God's hand must have been at work in these military, political, and religious triumphs, preparing the King of Spain for victories to come, whose pinnacle would be the conquest of Jerusalem.²⁹

Older traditions and literature contributed to the nationalistic focus of this eschatology. The House of Aragon inherited the title, "Patron of the Holy Places." The rise of Catalonia and Aragon under a "new Zerubbabel" had been prophesied in a mid-fourteenth century document.³⁰ This Ruler would recapture Jerusalem, establish a reign of peace and justice, convert the Jews and infidels, and gather all "the sheep together under one shepherd."³¹ In 1486, a commentary identified King Ferdinand as the New David and prospective Last World Emperor; copies of this commentary were distributed with the King's blessing.³² The defeat of the Moors in 1492 seemed to vindicate all these older prophecies. A Spanish led conquest of Jerusalem was imminent.

Out of these three traditions—the overseas missions of the Franciscan Order, the apocalyptic fervor of Spiritual Franciscans, and the court poetry and religious dreams of Spanish nationalists—grew the single faith-story which impelled Columbus across the Atlantic and bestowed upon him the two roles of world missionary and financial backer of the Final Crusade.

²⁷ Delno C. West, "Introduction," *The Libro de las profecias of Christopher Columbus* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1991), pp. 27-33.

²⁸ Delno C. West, "Medieval Ideas of Apocalyptic Mission and the Early Franciscans in Mexico." *The Americas. A Quarterly Review of Inter-American Cultural History* (45:1989). p. 295.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 299, 301-302, 305.

³⁰ Zerubbabel was the Messianic figure expected to rule in Jerusalem after the Persians had overthrown the Babylonians in 538 B.C.E. (Haggai 1:11-29, Zechariah 3:8; 4:6-9; 6:12). Zerubbabel also appears in the Messianic lineage of Jesus as reported in both Luke and Matthew.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 301.

³² *Ibid.*

(1) The Conversion of the Heathen

The preaching of the Gospel to heathen nations across the waters was, according to Columbus, the first of two uncompleted prophecies: "Our Lord is hastening these things... the Gospel must now be proclaimed to so many lands in such a short time."³³ In the apocalyptic literature of the late Middle Ages, the conversion of the heathen was consistently identified as one of the necessary events to precede the consummation of history. As written in the Gospel of Matthew,

And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations; and then the end will come (MT 24:14).

For Columbus, and many others of his era, it was not possible for this prophecy to be fulfilled until after his first voyage. Only then could missionaries travel "to all nations" to preach the gospel "throughout the whole world."

In fact, in his journals Columbus consistently presented himself as a missionary to the Indies. After five weeks of anxious sailing across uncharted waters, his first reported comment on the Bahamian people concerned the best means to convert them to Christianity. Later parts of the *Diario* from the first voyage are filled with long discussions of the same topic: not only the landfall of October 12, but also entries for October 16, November 1, 6, 12, and 27; December 16 and 24. Reading these texts from Columbus reveals a man who thought more like a missionary than an explorer.

In this *Diario* Columbus also reported his strategy for winning the conversion of these people. Treating them well was the first step. By doing this, the Spaniards would win their affection and trust and their positive disposition towards Christian people and their religion (*Diario*, 65, 83, 231, 265). Second, Columbus had large plans for the group of Tainos recruited/kidnapped by him to return to Spain. They were to be instructed in the Spanish language and in the Christian faith so that, "returning, they might be interpreters for the Christians, and so that they would take on our customs and faith" (*Diario*, 143).³⁴ At the same time, Columbus also planned for Spaniards - including members of his own household - to learn their language: "given devout religious persons knowing thoroughly the language that they use, soon all of them would become Christian" (*Diario*, 141). Since Columbus believed that the dialect on all the

³³ Delno C. West and August Kling (trans. and ed.), *The Libro de las profecias of Christopher Columbus* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1991), p. 109.

³⁴ Of the two dozen Tainos whom Columbus took to Spain, at least six survived. They were baptized in Spain with the King and Queen as sponsors, and they returned to the Indies on the second voyage. One of them adopted the name, Diego Colón, which was also the name of a son of Columbus.

islands was the same, Spaniards only needed to learn one language in order to preach the Gospel in all these islands.

Third, though only a layman, Columbus himself initiated the process of Christian instruction for his new companions. Even before his ships left the Caribbean for Spain, the Indians travelling with him already knew how to make the sign of the cross and could recite the *Pater Noster* and the *Ave Maria*.

They say very quickly any prayer that we tell them to say, and they make the sign of the cross. So that Your Highnesses ought to resolve to make them Christians: for I believe that if you begin, in a short time you will end up having converted to our Holy Faith a multitude of peoples (*Diario*, 143-145).

He also used the occasion of erecting a cross on each new island for Christian worship and instruction. Initially, this would be done only by himself and his crew. Later, he enlisted the local people in this project.

He put an impressive cross in the middle of the town plaza. The Indians helped greatly in doing this and, he says, they prayed and venerated it; and because of the indications that they give, the Admiral hopes in Our Lord that all those islands will become Christian (*Diario*, 247).

His journals from the second, third, and fourth voyages only made even more prominent this concern for conversion, especially as the expected quantities of gold failed to appear.

Gold from the Indies for the Final Crusade

Throughout his writings, Columbus consistently identified one purpose of his voyage as the acquisition of sufficient gold to fund a Spanish crusade for the conquest of Jerusalem.

Before the first voyage, early in 1492, he had informed the Sovereigns of this plan, as he reminded them in an entry to his *Diario*:

For thus I urged Your Highnesses to spend all the profits of this my enterprise on the conquest of Jerusalem, and Your Highnesses laughed and said that it would please them and that even without this profit they had that desire (*Diario*, 291).

When he sailed away from his new settlement on Hispaniola and headed back to Spain, he left thirty-nine of his original crew to acquire gold by mining and trading with the people of the island. His final instructions to these men were that they should acquire a "barrel of gold . . . in such quantity that the Sovereigns, before three years are passed, will undertake and prepare to go conquer the Holy Sepulchre" (*ibid*).

That was in 1492. By 1501, nine years later, he had not yet delivered the "barrel of gold" to launch the Final Crusade. He wrote his *Book of Prophecies*, in good part, to urge the King and Queen to action. He intended the many prophecies assembled in his book to make up for the deficiency of gold. His prophetic texts concerned two subjects: the conversion of the heathen by his discovery of the Indies and the recapture of Jerusalem. Columbus reminded their Highnesses that they had already seen the first of these prophecies fulfilled through his miraculous voyage to the Indies. They should therefore confidently expect that "the other matter will turn out" in the same way.³⁵ God provided the voyage to the Indies just as Isaiah had foretold,

so you may rejoice in the other things that I am going to tell you about our Jerusalem upon the basis of the same authority. If you have faith, you may be certain that there will be success also in that other project.... The Abbot Joachim of Fiore, a Calabrian, said that the restorer of the House of Mt. Zion would come out of Spain.³⁶

Besides, Columbus argued, he had provided the Sovereigns with some gold from the Indies, and they should remember that they began their war with the Moors without adequate funds; that venture had succeeded, as would a crusade to recover Jerusalem, if they had sufficient faith.

The *Book of Prophecies* did not produce the much-desired Crusade. Two years later, during the fourth voyage, Columbus heard God console him concerning the delayed Crusade. Columbus found himself in the midst of a desperate predicament: he was suffering from a high fever; one of his ships was landlocked in a river harbor; and his crew on shore were under attack by hostile Indians. In this apparently hopeless situation, Columbus heard a "compassionate voice" address him. The message from that divine voice is too long to repeat here, but one line meant the most to Columbus:

Thine old age shall not prevent thee from accomplishing any great undertaking. Abraham exceeded a hundred years of age when he begat Isaac; nor was Sarah young.³⁷

Apparently, "the compassionate voice" knew what Columbus had just discovered: a gold mine believed by Columbus to be the richest of the Indies. Indeed, later in this same letter, Columbus informed the monarchs that the mine he found was none other than the same mine from which Solomon

³⁵ Delno C. West and August Kling (trans. and eds.), *The Libro de las profecias of Christopher Columbus* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1991), p. 111.

³⁶ *Ibid.* It was not Joachim of Fiore, but Arnold of Villanova who first uttered this prophecy.

³⁷ R. H. Major (trans.), *Christopher Columbus. Four Voyages to the New World, Letters and Selected Documents* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1978), p. 185.

acquired gold for the building of the first temple.³⁸ Their majesties would have plenty of gold, for the crusade and for the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem. The only difference between them and Solomon is that Solomon had to buy his gold, but they need only send ships to pick it up.³⁹

The quantity of gold in that mine did not live up to the high expectations of Columbus. In fact, none of the economic resources which he brought back from the Indies proved to be sufficient for the needs of a new Crusade. No matter how many people he shipped to Spain for sale as slaves (with most dying on the way), no matter how many others were rounded up for the plantations (*encomienda*) of their Spanish masters, no matter how many tribes were conquered, no matter how many new islands were discovered, the wealth acquired was never sufficient to fund a Spanish armada to Jerusalem. Yet, Columbus would not give up the task that he believed God had given him.

Therefore, in his Will and Testament (*Majorat*), he set forth once more his plan for the recapture of Jerusalem.

At the time I started to go and discover the Indies, it was with the intention of supplicating the King and Queen, our Lords, that the revenue which their Highnesses might have from the Indies, they should determine to spend in the conquest of Jerusalem; and if they do it, it will be a good design; and if not, that it may yet be the said Diego [his son, who would go] with the King, our Lord ... to Jerusalem to reconquer it, or go alone with the greatest force that he has... because I believe that after the King and Queen, our Lords, and their successors, shall see that he [Diego] is determined in this, their Highnesses will be moved to do it themselves, and will give him aid and comfort.⁴⁰

God's story could not be left unfinished; if the King of Spain would not lead the crusade to recover Jerusalem, then it would have to be Diego, the son of Columbus, who must "go alone with the greatest force that he has."

Columbus died in 1506 without ever seeing a Spanish fleet sail for Jerusalem. Neither King Ferdinand nor his heir ever mustered any forces for an attack on Jerusalem; Charles was too occupied with the Reformation and the defense of Vienna against Turkish armies to concern himself with Jerusalem. Needless to add, Diego Colón, Columbus's son, took no action to lead the Final Crusade of which his father dreamed so passionately.

However, this lack of activity was not indicative of the demise of the dream. The medieval hope for a Christian Jerusalem lived on, passing from the first generation of Spanish explorers to their followers, from the Spaniards themselves

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 196-197.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ John Boyd Thacher, *Christopher Columbus: His Life, His Work* (New York and London: Knickerbocker, 1903) Vol. III, pp. 652-653.

to their Mexican converts. The Mexican pageant of 1537 enacted this same dream yet again, now by the newest generation of Christians, two oceans removed from the Holy City, but already immersed in its story.

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RELIGIOUS MODERNISM IN THE ARAB WORLD, INDIA AND IRAN: THE PERILS AND PROSPECTS OF A DISCOURSE*

The increasing sacralization of politics in Muslim societies over the course of the past decade has not only attested to the staying power of religion in the face of change, but has also served notice as to modernization's inability to immunize societies undergoing change against the resurgence of traditional values and their extension to social transactions.¹ The implication of these realizations for academia as well as future of politics in Muslim societies has been to initiate new strategies for the development process so that the objectives of change may be reconciled with the continuing salience of religious loyalties. In the eyes of many, pursuing the *via media* may be the only path out of both the current quandary and the incubus which the future may hold. While in countries such as Pakistan or Malaysia, the "middle way" has meant acceding to the role of Islam in statecraft with the hope of minimizing the challenge of Islam's more assertive face, elsewhere, there has been more concern for changing Islam itself—making it compatible with the objectives of modernization before introducing it to statecraft. In this regard, many have viewed Islamic modernism as the means for facilitating a janus-faced existence of serving Islam and yet marching towards modernity.² Islamic modernism is expected to promote modernization under the veneer of Islam and, by the same token, act to diffuse the revivalist inklings of that religion. For, the infusion of faith with modern values is believed to sever the linkage between Islam and sociopolitical action by reducing the power and influence of Islam in general and sublimating its politically consequential doctrines in particular.³ In fact, it is argued that it was the demise of Islamic modernism at the turn of the century and the

* I wish to express my gratitude to Ali Banuazizi, Leila Fawaz and Farhan Ahmad Nizami for their comments on the earlier draft of this paper.

¹ In this regard see, Said Amir Arjomand, "Social Change and Movements of Revitalization in Contemporary Islam," in James Beckford (ed.), *New Religious Movements and Rapid Social Change* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1986), pp. 87-112; and Leonard Binder, *Islamic Liberalism. A Critique of Development Ideologies* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988).

² This argument is best articulated in Bassam Tibi, *The Crisis of Modern Islam: A Preindustrial Culture in the Scientific-Technological Age*, Judith von Sivers (trans.) (Salt Lake City, UT: The University of Utah Press, 1988).

³ Examples of these ideas may be found in Mohammed Arkoun, *Critique de la raison islamique* (Paris: Maisonneuve-Larose, 1984), Hans Kung, "Christianity and World Religions: The Dialogue with Islam as One Model," in *The Muslim World*, Vol. 77, No. 2 (April, 1987), pp. 80-95, and Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity, Transformation of An Intellectual Tradition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp. 130-62.

absence of a "reformed Islam" that permitted the emergence of a movement proclaiming an "atavist" ethos in the era of progress.⁴

Yet, such a prognosis overlooks three important considerations. First, whenever implemented, modernism as a school of religious reform has failed to grow roots in the corpus of Islamic thought and hence has remained, by and large, outside the institutional structure of Islam. Second, modernist thought has time and again proved to be a transient tendency, either giving place to rival ideas or metamorphosing into political movements. Third, the accolade for modernism, as an "ideal type" to be distinguished from revivalism, obfuscates the causal linkage as well as the continuity between the two, which can cast doubt on the ability of modernism to thwart the challenge of revivalism.

A cursory examination of the historical record will further elucidate the three caveats expressed above. In the interests of parsimony, this study is limited to three schools of modernism, two of which emerged in the nineteenth century and one in the twentieth. These three schools are not only the most significant instances of Islamic modernism, the ones with the most elaborate intellectual formulations and social impact, but in their diversity of structure, timing and origins, and yet, commonality of purpose and legacy, serve to confirm the conclusions of this study. The three schools are those of Muḥammad ʿAbduh and his successors in Egypt and the Arab world, Sayyid Ahmad Khan and the Aligarh movement in India,⁵ and Shīʿi modernism centered in Iran, Iraq and Lebanon.

Shīʿi modernism, in effect, refers to two separate if interrelated movements. The first emerged in Iran and Iraq at the turn of the century as a corollary of the Constitutionalist movement on the one hand, and the Babi-Bahāʾi schism on the other.⁶ The second was active in the 1930s, and has resurfaced since the 1960s in Iran, Iraq and Lebanon as a force for sociopolitical

⁴ Rahman, *Islam and Modernity*, pp. 140-41, and Hamid Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1982), p. 83.

⁵ There exist a number of works on these Sunni modernist movements which detail the doctrines and ideas of the movements. See, Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939*, 2nd ed., (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Malcolm Kerr, *Islamic Reform* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966); Nikki Keddie, *Jamal al-Din al-Afghani: A Political Biography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972); Serif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought: A Study in the Modernization of Turkish Political Ideas* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982); Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 2nd ed., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979); Hamid Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought*; John Voll, *Islam: Continuity and Change in the Modern World* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1982); and Aziz Ahmad, *Islamic Modernism in India and Pakistan, 1857-1964* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967).

⁶ Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought*, pp. 160-94, and Abbas Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal: Making of the Babi Movement in Iran, 1844-1850* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1989).

change.⁷ Shī'ī modernist tendencies of the turn of the century never blossomed into a full-fledged movement other than in the form of the Babi-Bahā'ī schism. This fact for the most part was due to the greater strength of the tradition of Islamic learning at the Shī'ī *madrasahs* and the unrivaled preponderance of philosophy, *ḥikmat* (theosophy) and *ʿirfān* (gnosis) in their curricula as a complement to *fiqh* (jurisprudence) and *kalām* (theology).⁸

While traditional Islamic thought was also taught at Sunni centers of learning, it had a stronger manifestation, especially at the philosophical level, in Shī'ī Islam. Succinctly put, the thriving existence of tradition in Shī'ism forestalled the need for alien worldviews in order to restore Islam. Despite the Western accolade for change, it was permanence of tradition and its livelihood that have marked Shī'ī history for most of this century. Change, however, did occur, not to resurrect a dying body of thought, but to respond to sociopolitical exigencies. Therefore, in the latter part of the twentieth century, Shī'ism, too, produced modernist thinkers, ideas and subsequently, a movement. It is this latter movement, which given its more elaborate corpus of ideas that is the subject of our study.

In Iran and Egypt, modernism was for the most part formulated in the centers of religious learning, but found important advocates among lay intellectuals. In India, modernism remained the domain of laymen and the intellectual leaders of the emerging middle classes. In Egypt and India modernism was by and large a force for social reform, but was concerned for the most part with the restoration of Islam to its lost grandeur. In Shī'ī circles, modernism was a force for social justice and constitutional rights.⁹

⁷ There, however, did exist certain instances of direct relations between the two modernist trends. For instance, in 1955 Taliqani reprinted Ayatollah Muḥammad Husayn Naʿīnī's *Tanbih al-ummah wa tanzih al-millah* written in 1909. Taliqani's commentary, introduction and notes on this work used Naʿīnī's arguments for political reform in the context of the modernist program of the twentieth century. Although Taliqani's efforts in this regard pertained more to his posture vis-a-vis the Pahlavi regime than reinterpreting Islam, it is indicative of a connection between the two movements.

⁸ On Shī'ī education and the curricula of *madrasahs* see, Roy Mottahedeh, *Mantle of the Prophet: Religion and Politics in Iran* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1985), pp. 89-109, and Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Traditional Islam in the Modern World* (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987), pp. 165-82. On the importance and continuity of traditional thought in Shī'ism in this century see, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Philosophy in Contemporary Persia: A Survey of Activities During the Past Two Decades* (Salt Lake City: Middle East Center, the University of Utah, 1972) and Henry Corbin, "The Force of Traditional Philosophy in Iran Today," in *Studies in Comparative Religion* (Winter 1968), pp. 12-26.

⁹ The data for this taxonomy are discussed in Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, and Ahmad, *Islamic Modernism*.

The Structure of the Modernist Discourse

Islamic modernism, as a discursive interpretation of Islam, emerged in the wake of the political and cultural subjugation of Muslim societies to Western colonialism in the nineteenth century and in response to social, economic and political dysfunctions produced by the modernization process in the twentieth century. It has in many ways been the Islamic equivalent of "*theologie nouvelle*," which had sought to reform Catholicism in Europe, and to bring the Church into contact with the modern world.¹⁰ In the debates surrounding the crises facing Muslims in both periods, Islamic modernism, while looking to Islam for answers, stood for the recognition of the West in absolute terms.¹¹ This recognition was not limited to military and economic spheres, but more importantly encompassed social values, ethics, philosophy and the arts, a theme which follows the acknowledgement of the irreversibility of the Western domination. Islamic modernism has not been unique in this regard:

Crises wrought by the Western impact on Asia and Africa began only when people in newly challenged societies felt that they were confronted not with merely another classic conflict with foreigners but with a significant turn in history that called for a re-evaluation of existing values and practices... a new framework for viewing the self and its relations with others need be adopted.¹²

For Islamic modernists the "fall of Islam" or the crises rampant in Muslim societies resulted from the religion's encounter with a superior corpus of thought and its omniverous socioeconomic institutions. Islamic modernism, therefore, has viewed the West as the paramount civilization whose dominance is not transient, nor merely a consequence of material progress. From this acknowledgement, modernism has proceeded to reshape Islam in the shadow of the West:

It would seem that for many of these people [modernists] there is a psychological need to cleanse the new and to make it fully acceptable by first wrapping it in the trappings of the old.¹³

¹⁰ On "*theologie nouvelle*" see, L. Praamsma, *The Church in the Twentieth Century*, Vol. 7 (St. Catharines, Ontario: Paideia Press, 1981).

¹¹ The theme of a debate between Muslims regarding reasons for the "fall of Islam" is discussed in Edward Mortimer, *Faith and Power; the Politics of Islam* (New York: Vintage Books, 1982), pp. 56-117.

¹² Lucian W. Pye, "Identity and Political Culture," in Leonard Binder *et al.*, *Crises and Sequences in Political Development* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), p. 111.

¹³ Pye writes that this reaction has been common to all traditional societies when confronted with the West. He writes,

[B]eneath their exhortations about the virtues of the past there is in fact a latent admiration for the modern world and for the contemporary traditions of science and development.

Pye, "Identity and Political Culture," p. 120.

Restoration of Islam to its lost grandeur while accepting the superiority of the West, however, was an inconsistent and even untenable proposition, one which has doomed the modernist enterprise despite its ambitious agenda. At a more immediate level, modernism has been constrained by the realities of Muslim life and thought. With no history of reform from within, nor secular thought as the Kantian revolution had introduced in the West, the Muslim world has proved unreceptive to the overtures of modernism. Furthermore, the inability of modernism to realize its ideals in form of viable social and religious institutions, has reduced modernism to subjugation of Islamic thought to the writ of the Western worldview, paving the way for Westernization through Islam. To begin with, Islamic modernism has failed to distinguish between a process of reform that follows the example of the West, and outright emulation and adoption of Western ideals and values. Second, Islamic modernists have proved ill-equipped to initiate and subsequently institutionalize such a process of reform.

The desire to promote religious reform based on ideals observed in the West, and yet avoiding consummate Westernization, has led modernists to bifurcate Islam and hence open it to assimilation and compromise. Islam as a religion has thus been separated from Islam as a civilization or cultural system. Modernists have declared their loyalty to the first while they have scorned the second. Islam as a religion has been depicted as a progressive force as the term is understood in the West, namely a body of ideas that can promote and sustain modern institutions. Yet, Islamic history and hence the civilization born of it have been seen as retrogressive in nature, and hence, impediments to the ideal of progress. By downplaying the role of history and its cultural and social vestiges in Muslim life, modernists have *ipso facto* placed great emphasis on ethical concepts pertaining to practice and idealized the early history of Islam, the reign of the "rightly-Guided" caliphs, and in the case of Shī'ī modernists, the lives of the Imams, especially 'Alī and Husayn.

Both of the above tendencies, i.e., bifurcation of Islam into religion and civilization, and the idealization of the past as the goal for the future, are most clearly reflected in Shī'ī modernist thought. The process of bifurcation here is most clearly evident in the distinction that 'Alī Shari'ati draws between *Alid* and *Safavid* (or "red"—revolutionary—and "black," quiescent and mournful) Shī'ism, where the former reflects not only the veritable ethos of the faith, but also the ideal of progress and struggle, while the latter by placing emphasis on theology, philosophy, art, culture, and the sublimation of Shī'ī messianic expectations in favor of quiescent political thought, is seen to epitomize religious decadence.¹⁴

¹⁴ 'Alī Shar'ati, *Shi'ah* (Shī'ism) (London: Husayniyyah-i Irshad Publications, nd.), pp. 22 and 177-226; *idem*, *Tashayyu'ī alavi va tashayyu'ī safavi* ('Alid Shī'ism and Safavid Shī'ism) (Tehran. 1350/1971).

The Shī'ī modernists' position was formulated in contradiction to the historical evolution of Shī'ī thought, and to its cardinal tenets such as the sixth Imam, Ja'far al-Šādiq, and later Shī'ī theologians' efforts to sublimate Shī'ī chiliasm and to channel the community's religious zeal into purely spiritual and soteriological concerns, or conversely, the Safavid's own chiliastic drive for power in the face of *ulamā's* admonitions. The fact that Shī'ī modernists chose not to address and interpret these historical facts with view to resolving their challenge to the modernist formulations served to limit their influence on Shī'ī religious thought and institutions.¹⁵

The idealization of the Imamate as a paradigm for struggle towards sociopolitical change, classified as the veritable Shī'ism of 'Alī and Husayn, and the disparagement of theology, philosophy, soteriology, art, literature and custom, all parcelled under the rubric of Safavid (or black) Shī'ism, act not only to accentuate the exoteric and this-worldly dimensions of religion but also to reinterpret them along political lines. This approach is reflected in later Shī'ī revivalist thought that emerged in Qum, Tehran and Najaf in the 1960s and the 1970s.¹⁶

The interpretive predilection of Islamic modernists did not relax their staunch observance of religious practices; it rather reinforced it. In fact what proved significant in this regard was not their observance, but the place and role that they ascribed to rituals and practice in religious life and thought. While the *leitmotif* of the modernist efforts was to examine, interpret and reconstruct the believers' outlook on religion and hence religious experience, to alter the path of history and undo the writ of some of its more bitter legacies, it has in effect challenged the meta-historical dimension of religious history. It has truncated religion's influence, limiting it to the affairs of the world—reducing faith to matters of ritual and practice. Moreover, the modernists have associated rituals and practice with social concerns, investing orthopraxy with political power and significance. Gibb wrote of the early modernists that "...they did care, very deeply, but that issues in dispute for them pertained to practical duties and social institutions alone."¹⁷

The condensation of Islam to its exoteric dimension, moreover, has gone hand-in-hand with reorienting Muslim attitudes towards the West, and inculcating Islamic thought and institutions with novel values. Islam, stripped of its traditional claim to a historical continuity, reduced to its exoteric dimension,

¹⁵ See Said Amir Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam, Religion, Political Order and Societal Change in Shi'ite Iran from the Beginning to 1890* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

¹⁶ See for instance, Hamid Enayat, "Iran Khumayni's Concept of the 'Guardianship of the Jurisconsult'" in James Piscatori (ed.) *Islam in the Political Process* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 160-80.

¹⁷ Hamilton A.R. Gibb, *Modern Trends in Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1947), p. 11.

and then compelled to confront a civilization whose superiority was already accepted and established by the modernists, had no option but to resort to apologetics.¹⁸ This tendency became more apparent the less modernism sought to reform Islam from within, as Thomist theology had done in Catholicism, and the more it resorted to syncretism—masquerading Western ideas and worldview behind a veneer of Islam. Kerr writes in this regard:

[The modernists] were born out of the desire of the Muslims to expel the Western invasion of Muslim culture. Yet they had no sufficient ideological basis on which to build new doctrines, other than a dimly understood Western one.¹⁹

In the earlier schools of modernism this process had taken the form of juxtaposing and subsequently fusing Islamic practices with Western ideals and hence creating an amalgam of the two where an Islamic dictum or doctrine would reflect a Western ideal or value. For instance, such concepts as *shūra* or *ijmāʿ* were seen to parallel and hence accommodate Western democracy.²⁰ In the latter-day modernism of Shīʿī Islam the process became one of a transmutation of a Shīʿī doctrine into a Western worldview. Shīʿī modernists did not search the tenets of their faith for concepts or doctrines that would resemble Western beliefs or conceptions, but such doctrines as Expectation of the Hidden Imam, Islamic justice and Imamate, as well as that faith's views on eschatology were cast in a new framework where they would reflect the spirit of positivism, liberalism, modern dialectical philosophy and the workings of the forces of production. There is little mention or praise of emulation of Western conceptions in Shīʿī modernists works, but rather it is the spirit of Western thought that is omnipresent in them.²¹ Shīʿī modernists' political antagonism towards

¹⁸ Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Islam in Modern History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), pp. 68 and 85-89; Charles Le Gai Eaton, *Islam and the Destiny of Man* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1985), pp. 9-72.

¹⁹ Kerr, *Islamic Reform*, p. 208.

²⁰ See, *ibid*; Fazlur Rahman, "The Principle of Shura and the Role of the Ummah in Islam," in Mumtaz Ahmad (ed.), *State, Politics and Islam* (Indianapolis, IN: American Trust Publications, 1986), pp. 87-96.

²¹ See for instance Bazargan's essay on religious reform in *Gumrahan* (Those Gone Astray) (Tehran: 1364/1984), pp.113-66; Shahrough Akhavi, "Sharfati's Social Thought," in Nikki Keddie (ed.), *Religion and Politics in Iran, Shi'ism from Quietism to Revolution* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983), p.128. Akhavi writes here:

Despite his apparently emphatic rejection of contradictions (seemingly based on his perceived need to contend against the dialectics of Marxism), they actually are an important element in his social thought after all...which rest fundamentally upon the constant interaction of mutually contradicting forces.

The author then adds that Sharfati's tenuous grounding in Shīʿī thought, born of his Western interpretation of the principles of the faith, remained a hallmark of his works. This point is further elucidated in Jalal Matini in "*ilm*" va "*ulamāʿ*" dar *asban Qurʾānwā ahādith* (Knowledge and the *ʿUlamāʿ* in the Language of the Qurʾān and the *Hadith*) in *Iran Nameh*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (Spring, 1984), pp. 457-59.

the West can hardly conceal their receptivity to western philosophical notions, approaches to science and technology, and political ideas ranging from those of Rousseau and Locke to that of Marx.²²

Shī'ī Modernism

Discourse with the West in Shī'ī circles has not been restricted to modernism, but has also been prevalent in traditional Shī'ī circles. The works of such scholars and thinkers as 'Allamah Sayyid Muḥammad Husayn Tabataba'ī, Sayyid Mahdi Ha'iri Yazdi or Husayn Quli Rashid have served as important introductions to debates between Shī'ism and Western philosophy.²³ Yet, what distinguishes the modernist discourse from traditional *'ulamā'*'s efforts in this regard is the former's permissive and assimilative posture vis-à-vis things Western as opposed to the latter's firm grounding in primordial tenets of the tradition of Islamic thought.

Modernist inklings in Shī'ism emerged first in the 1930s in the ideas of Mirza Rida Quli Sharī'at-Sangilaji whose efforts were directed at liberalizing Shī'ī religious thought and practice and purging it of its popular accretions with view to bringing the faith into the mainstream of modernization in Iran at the time.²⁴ In the 1960s and the 1970s, Sangilaji's attempts to open Shī'ism to modernist interpretations found new advocates in the works of Mahdi Bazargan, Ayatullah Sayyid Mahmud Taliqani, Ayatullah Murtaza Mutahhari, Imam Musa Sadr, Sayyid Muḥammad Baqir al-Sadr, Muḥammad Javad Mughniyah and 'Ali Sharī'ati as well as such institutions as the Guftar-i Mah gathering and Husayniyyah-i Irshad institution. While there existed no intellectual or political agreement across the board among these thinkers, the direction of their ideas constituted a tacit consensus and a loci which coagulated them, in essence, into a single intellectual current.

²² The impact of liberal and positivist thought is discernable in Bazargan's work, see H.E. Chehabi, *Iranian Politics and Religious Modernism: the Liberation Movement of Iran Under the Shah and Khomeini* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), pp.103-40. Marxist influence on Taliqani, Sharī'ati and Musa Sadr is more important, and is evident in their dialectical and revolutionary view of the faith; see Daryush Shayegan, *Qu'est-ce qu'une révolution religieuse* (Paris: Les Presses D'Aujourd'hui, 1982).

²³ See 'Allamah Sayyid Muḥammad Husayn Tabataba'ī, *Usul va falsafah-i realism* (Foundations and Philosophy of Realism) (Tehran: Akhundi, nd.), Sayyid Mahdi Ha'iri Yazdi, *Kavishhay-i 'aql-i nazari* (Explorations by the Theoretical Mind) (Tehran: 1347/1958); Husayn Quli Rashid, *Du falsaf-i sharq va gharb* (Two Philosophers of East and West) (Tehran: nd.); cited and discussed in Nasr, *Islamic Philosophy*, p. 7.

²⁴ See Yann Richard, "Sharī'at Sangilaji. A Reformist Theologian of the Rida Shah Period," Katherine Arjomand (trans.), in Said Amir Arjomand (ed.), *Authority and Political Culture in Shī'ism* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1988), pp. 159-77.

In this regard, Bazargan's works were debates with Western liberal thought and positivist philosophy.²⁵ He sought to systematize Shī'ī thought in scientific terms by establishing linkages between faith and social action similar to those encountered in the West in the liberal and positivist philosophical circles since the Renaissance and in the works of such Christian modernist thinkers as Teilhard de Chardin, and Alexis Carrel or Pierre Lecomte de Noüy, whose works had influenced Bazargan.²⁶ Mughniyah's works reveal similar intentions but different intellectual formulations. Mughniyah's systematization of Shī'ī thought and practice paralleled more what Max Weber has termed "rationalization." While Mughniyah also sought to make Shī'ī religious doctrines relevant to existing sociopolitical realities, these efforts were by and large devoid of philosophical exegeses and instead hinged on the rationalization of the hierarchy of religious knowledge and institutions and subsequently their linkage to society.²⁷ For instance, Mughniyah reinterpreted Shī'ī views on the omniscience and perspicacity of the Imams with the aim of extending the purview of the faith to include worldly affairs. In his hands these doctrines step beyond the boundaries of Shī'ī spirituality into the realm of current events, substituting eschatology with concern for sociopolitical change. These exercises systematize, rationalize and hence modernize the doctrine of Imamate.²⁸

Musa Sadr's career was also akin to that of Bazargan and Mughniyah. Sadr's focus, however, revolved more on opening Shī'ism to liberal/modern outlooks than on systematizing or rationalizing the faith.²⁹ Musa Sadr's later works, however, parted with liberal interpretations and tended towards millenarian outlooks, which utilized formulations based on Western dialectical philosophy.³⁰

²⁵ For a thorough account of Bazargan's ideas see Chehabi, *Iranian Politics*

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 46-50. Also see, Bazargan, *Gumrahan*, *idem*, *Sayr-i tahavvul-i qur'ān* (The Path of Development of the Qur'ān), 2 vols., (Tehran, 1362/1984-85); and *idem*, *Bazgasht bi qur'ān* (Return to the Qur'ān) (Tehran: 1361/1983-84). Also see Ann Lambton, "A Reconsideration of the Position of *Marja'i Taqlid*" in *Studia Islamica*, Vol. 10 (1964), pp. 124-25.

²⁷ Muḥammad Javad Mughniyah, *Al-Shī'ah wa'l-hakumun* (Shī'ism and Rulers) (Beirut: 1961). I have used the Persian translation of this work by Mustafa Zamani, *Shī'ah va samandaran-i khudsar* (Shī'ism and Authoritarian Rulers) (Qum: 1343/1964)

²⁸ See Karl Heinrich Göbel, *Moderne Schiitische und Staatsidee* (Opladen: Leske Verlag + Budrich, 1984), pp. 109-16.

²⁹ On Musa Sadr's views see, Fouad Ajami, *The Vanished Imam, Musa al-Sadr and the Shia of Lebanon* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986), pp. 123-58, and Augustus Richard Norton, *Amal and the Shī'a: Struggle for the Soul of Lebanon* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1987), pp. 39-46. An interesting instance of Sadr's modernist inklings, in the context of women's rights in Iran, is recorded in the Reminiscences of Mehrangiz Dowlatshahi in an interview with Shirin Sami'i, 5/1984, pp. 201-02, in the Oral History Collection of Foundation for Iranian Studies.

³⁰ Ajami, *Vanished Imam*, pp. 123-58, and Helena Cobban, "Growth of Shī'ī Power in Lebanon and Its Implications for the Future," in Juan Cole and Nikki Keddie (eds.), *Shī'ism and Social Protest* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), p. 144. Norton has asserted that Musa Sadr was an anti-communist, *Amal*, pp. 42-43. However, General Mansur Qadar, former Iranian Ambassador to Lebanon and a high ranking officer of the Iranian security forces reports that Musa Sadr was arrested and hence known to SAVAK first during his student years when he became involved with socialist/leftist student agitations; see, Reminiscences of General Mansur Qadar in an interview with Gholam Reza Afkhami, 4/30 and 5/4/1986, p. 42, in the Oral History Collection of the Foundations for Iranian Studies.

The contributions of both Sayyid Muḥammad Baqir al-Sadr and Ayatullah Murtaza Mutahhari to Shīʿī modernism began with philosophical discourses. Both thinkers set out to explicate and even revive the tradition of Islamic philosophy (which they saw through the prism of Shīʿism) and Shīʿī theology, and yet engaged Western philosophy in a debate revolving around issues of significance to Western thought. They hoped to formalize and rationalize Shīʿī thought and, at the same time, infuse the discipline of philosophy with a sense for the sacred. In this exercise, Mutahhari looked to the Western-educated secularist Shīʿis as his audience to a greater extent than Sadr, whose works are also expositions of Shīʿism to a wider audience, Sunni as well as Western.

Despite the commonality of their purpose, the two thinkers differed in their approach to Islamic thought. Mutahhari, himself a philosopher and a student of ʿAllamah Tabatabaʾī, was mostly concerned with the realm of Islamic philosophy and placing it within the context of contemporary intellectual history. By the same token, he sought the confirmation of the validity of the premises and achievements of Islamic philosophy to the skeptical Western-educated Muslims.³¹ Baqir al-Sadr was a *faqih* (juriconsult) as well as a philosopher by training. His efforts to provide philosophical responses to challenges posed by Western thought made him more interested in finding Western philosophical premises, which he saw as universal truisms, such as the doctrine of Induction, principle of Causality or Historical Dialectics within the corpus of Islamic philosophy.³² Al-Sadr's later works revealed a greater degree of absorption and assimilation of these themes, especially that of modern Western dialectic philosophy and hence moved from a search for common ground between philosophies of the East and the West to adopting the outlook of the latter in examining the former.³³

Ayatullah Sayyid Mahmud Taliqani's approach was intellectually akin to that of Bazargan, yet was not in debate with or drawn from liberalism or positivism, but centered on Western/modern dialectical philosophy.³⁴ Although bent on discerning the truth of the Islamic message and the Shīʿī perspective and

³¹ See for instance, Murtaza Mutahhari, "The Problem of Contradiction in Islamic Philosophy," Shariyar Saʿadat (trans.), in *Al-Tawhid*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Muharram: 1404), pp. 66-82. Also see his commentary on Tabatabaʾī's *Usul-i falsafah* (Principles of Philosophy), 3 vols., (Qum. 1332/1953) and "Understanding the Uniqueness of the Qurʾān," Mahliqa Qarzʾī (trans.), in *Al-Tawhid*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Muharram: 1404), pp. 9-24.

³² Sadr's most important work on philosophy, *Falsafatuna*, has been translated by Shams C. Inati as *Our Philosophy* (London: KPI/Muḥammadi Trust, 1988).

³³ Muḥammad Baqir al-Sadr, *Iqtisaduna* (Our Economics), 2 vols.; volume 1 was translated into Persian by Kazim Musavi (Tehran: 1350/1971) and volume 2 by Abuʾl-ʿAli Sipahbudi (Tehran: 1357/1978).

³⁴ Richard Campbell (trans. and ed.), *Society and Economics in Islam: Writings and Declarations of Ayatollah Sayyid Mahmud Taliqani* (Berkeley, CA: Mizan Press, 1982); Ayatollah Sayyid Mahmud Taliqani, *Jahad va shahadat* (Jihad and Martyrdom) (Tehran: nd.); *idem*, *As azadi ta shahadat* (From Freedom to Martyrdom) (Tehran: nd.).

hence highly critical of both capitalism and Marxism, Taliqani nevertheless revealed a predilection for dialectical interpretations of Islamic history, the Qurʾān and Islamic social and legal precepts.³⁵ While dialectical formulations had also typified the works of both Musa Sadr and Baqir al-Sadr, neither *ʿalim* had resorted to dialectical interpretations as definitively as Taliqani.

The trend initiated by Taliqani culminated in the works of ʿAli Shariʿati, who did more than any other Shiʿi modernist thinker to fuse religion with a modern worldview, in his case Marxism. Shariʿati's works dissociated Shiʿi doctrines, popular beliefs and religious rites from their philosophical and spiritual foundations and remolded them into a Marxian paradigm wherein the dialectics of social conflict nudges history towards its inevitably revolutionary fate.³⁶

More recently, Shariʿati's ideas have found echo in the works of ʿAbdu'l-Karim Surush, who has advocated the modernization of Shiʿi jurisprudence.³⁷ Surush's approach differs from those advocated in the 1970s in that it is in debate with Shiʿi revivalism rather than traditional Shiʿi thought. Hence, Surush has been more concerned with promoting *fiqh-i puya* (creative jurisprudence) as the means for reforming Shiʿi revivalism than with socioeconomic issues, which were at any rate incorporated into Shiʿi revivalism by Khumayni.

Sociopolitical Foundations of Islamic Modernism

The modernist agenda, despite its promise, has been hard-pressed to significantly expand its niche in Islamic thought. This owes not only to the nature of the modernist discourse, but also to the characteristics of the exponents and followers of modernism. In the first place, modernist thinkers have never come from the ranks of high *ʿulamāʾ*. Even Muḥammad ʿAbduh or Ayatullah Taliqani, despite the respect and following which they have enjoyed, were not seen as supreme members of *ʿulamāʾ*. ʿAbduh, for instance, became the Rector of Al-Azhar, but his elevation in the hierarchy of that institution was in good part based on Khedival fiat.³⁸ Moreover, in Egypt as well as Shiʿi centers of Iran and Iraq,

³⁵ Sayyid Mahmud Taliqani, *Islam and Ownership*, Ahmad Jabbari and Farhang Rajaei (trans.), (Lexington, KY: Mazda Publishers, 1983), pp. 34-88.

³⁶ See Hamid Dabashi, "Ali Shariʿati's Islam: Revolutionary Uses of Faith in a Post-Traditional Society," in *The Islamic Quarterly*, Vol. 27, No. 4 (Fourth Quarter, 1983), pp. 203-22. Also see Said Amir Arjomand, "M la Recherche de la Conscience Collective: Durkheim's Ideological Impact in Turkey and Iran," in *The American Sociologist*, Vol. 27 (May, 1982), pp. 94-102; and Ali Shariʿati, *Man and Islam*, Fatollah Marjani (trans.), (Houston, TX: FILINC, nd.), pp. 82-120.

³⁷ ʿAbdu'l-Karim Surush, "Qabz va bast-i shifāh" (Monopolization of Shiʿism), in *Kayhan-i Farhangī*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (April, 1988).

³⁸ On Taliqani see, Mangol Bayat, "Mahmud Taleqani and the Iranian Revolution," in Martin Kramer (ed.), *Shiʿism, Resistance, and Revolution* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1987), pp. 69-79. Here Bayat's analysis also reveals the political rather than religious bases of Taliqani's popular image and following.

where modernism began among the *‘ulamā’*, after the first generation most advocates of the idea were laymen or members of the lower clergy.

In addition, modernism found its greatest following among the emerging middle classes. Members of this nascent and thriving social stratum felt the imprint of the West most, and moreover, were politically more attuned to the message and promise of modernism. A cursory review of the profile of the participants in the three schools under study here will attest to the middle class base of modernism. During the early phase of the movement, the modernist circle associated with ‘Abduh acted as the representatives of the middle classes and as such enjoyed the support of Khedive Isma‘il. However, the modernists’ inability to consolidate their hold over the religious establishment, from which they sought legitimacy, combined with the restlessness of that establishment regarding modernists’ intentions compelled the House of Muḥammad ‘Alī to withdraw its favor from modernism. At the same time, modernism failed to expand its base of support downwards and to develop a following among the masses, which dimmed the prospects for their continued prominence. With the ‘Urabi Rebellion of 1882 and the British occupation of Egypt, another middle class-based idea, namely nationalism, emerged on the scene. It quickly supplanted modernism, captured the imagination of Egyptians and dominated Egyptian politics for the next century.³⁹

‘Abduh’s successors often showed even less sensitivity to sociopolitical imperatives, further intellectualized their discourse, and thus narrowed modernism’s base of support. Muhammed Arkoun’s brand of modernism, for instance, has become embroiled in debates with French intellectual trends, and with its clamour for “deconstructing Islam,” has widened the chasm between modernism and society.⁴⁰ As a result, modernism has become further divorced from its social context, a development which in part accounts for the facility with which revivalism has gained ground.⁴¹ Latter-day modernists in the Arab world have sought to remedy this shortcoming, and have incorporated demand for democracy, social justice and civil liberties into their discourse.⁴²

In India, the middle-class nature of modernism was even more pronounced. Sayyid Ahmad Khan’s program was not only directed at the restoration of Islam via reform, but its impetus and support came from his promise of reversing the diminishing representation of Muslims in the Indian Civil Service, which had followed the Mutiny of 1857 and the official abrogation of the

³⁹ On this issue see, Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, pp. 133-34

⁴⁰ Arkoun, *Critique*. For a discussion of Arkoun’s ideas see, Binder, *Islamic Liberalism*, pp. 161-69.

⁴¹ Abdallah Laroui, *The Crisis of the Arab Intellectual. Traditionalism or Historicism?*, Diarmid Cammell (trans.), (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), chs. 4-5.

⁴² See for instance, Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na‘im, *Toward An Islamic Reformation. Civil Liberties, Human Rights, and International Law* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1990).

Mogul Empire. Therefore, above and beyond its idealism, Sayyid Ahmad Khan's program addressed the grievances of, and hence appealed to, Muslim middle classes and bureaucratic elements.⁴³

It is instructive to note that among the Young Ottomans too, similar trends were evident. They were the representatives of the bureaucracy and the bourgeoisie. Their leaders were products of either the prestigious Translation Office of Istanbul or the New Army, and their supporters were bureaucrats and middle-class elements who were disenchanted with Tanzimat reforms and its executors in the Sublime Porte.⁴⁴

In Iran, Iraq and Lebanon, Shī'ī modernism stayed true to this pattern and surfaced as a middle-class phenomenon. Regardless of their agendas, the efforts of both lay and *ʿulamā'* modernist thinkers in Iran, from the outset, but especially in the latter part of the twentieth century, were directed at swaying the religiously conscious and/or politically disgruntled middle classes.⁴⁵ (It should be pointed out here that in the 1960s and 1970s the greater attention paid to religious symbolisms by secular political thinkers and dissident activists whose following came from the middle class intellectuals such as Jalal Al-i Ahmad, both aided and encouraged Shī'ī modernism in formulating a sociopolitical program for rallying middle class support.)⁴⁶ The identification of a social base and the propagation of a cause marked the transformative instincts within modernism, nudging the movement to evolve from disparate intellectual centers into a political body with a distinct identity.

In Lebanon, Musa Sadr's version of modernism similarly found a political-institutional expression in the Amal, which emerged as a movement for furthering the sociopolitical aspirations of the Shī'īs. Moreover, while concerned with the fate of Shī'ī peasants and manned by the youth of south Lebanon, Amal's objectives over time became increasingly harmonized with the objectives of the upwardly mobile Shī'ī middle classes.⁴⁷

The association with the middle classes was to haunt latter-day modernism just as it had done its nineteenth century predecessors in Egypt, India, and also in Ottoman Turkey. Although the larger representation of the middle

⁴³ David Lelyveld, *Aligarh's First Generation. Muslim Solidarity in British India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978).

⁴⁴ For the social background of Young Ottomans see, Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, pp. 137-56.

⁴⁵ See, Chehabi, *Iranian Politics*, chs. 1-4. For instance, such bastions of Shī'ī modernist thought as the Husayniyyah-i Irshad were located in the affluent northern Tehran, and lured students, bureaucrats and members of the intelligentsia. In Lebanon the prominence of Musa Sadr and the Amal in the 1970's increased the popularity of the movement among middle class Shī'īs. Norton correlates the development of Amal with social mobilization and modernization of Lebanese Shī'īs as well as the aspirations of the more affluent Shī'ī migrant labor force whose social status had enhanced following their stay abroad; Norton, *Amal*, pp.13-36.

⁴⁶ Mottahedeh, *Mantle of the Prophet*, pp. 287-315.

⁴⁷ Norton, *Amal*, pp. 33-59.

classes in the social structure of Shi'i societies under study here made Shi'i modernism a more religiously salient and politically potent force, it did not suffice as a foundation for the sustenance of the movement.⁴⁸ The survival of the movement, rather, hinged on the expansion of its bases of support and changes in its character and objectives. To forestall its marginalization and subsequent extinction—the fate that Sunni modernists of the turn of the century had confronted—Shi'i modernism became even more intensely politicized, discarding much of its claim to salvation of religion for notions of social change that would *a fortiori* reflect the needs and ideals of religion as well.

This subtle change in focus, given the acute and immediate predicaments confronting the expanding middle classes and marginalized traditional elements in Iran, Iraq and Lebanon proved highly effective in galvanizing ideas into popular-based religious movements. "Islamizing" social and political grievances, a trend also gaining favor with stultified secular movements of political dissent in the 1970s, initiated processes through which religious reform became religiously conscious social action. While this reorientation helped Shi'i modernists escape the fate of modernism in Egypt and India, it nevertheless marked the beginning of the end of the movement—its transformation into a political existence.

Bazargan's Liberation Movement of Iran (Nihzat-i Azadi-yi Iran), Musa Sadr's Amal or the political alliances that emanated from Taliqani or Shari'ati's teachings,⁴⁹ in essence, consolidated around social and political grievances—"Islamizing" the mobilization of the middle classes through the use of religious doctrines and symbols. In Iran, by the late 1970s the Liberation Movement or Sazman -i Mujahidin-i Khalq (People's *Mujahidin* Organization) became the embodiment of modernism's politicization of Islam. In Lebanon, the modernist inclination for political action found its most clear manifestation in the Amal where the interpretative and innovative views of Musa Sadr and the like of Mughniyah were converted into a successful mechanism for the elaboration and expression of Shi'i social and confessional grievances.⁵⁰ By the late 1970s Shi'i modernism had in effect passed from the scene and became embodied in political movements of mass following, but of a different character and purpose.

Therefore, while the modernists have been hailed in Western circles for advocating reform, in the Muslim world they proved unable to institutionalize

⁴⁸ Chehabi, *Iranian Politics*.

⁴⁹ Reference here is to alliances which emanated from Taliqani and Shari'ati's teachings, and primarily, the Sazman-i Mujahidin-i Khalq (Organization of People's *Mujahidin*). Abrahamian argues that the Mujahidin arrived at their ideas independent of Shari'ati, and that the ideas of the two were merely conterminous; see, Ervand Abrahamian, *Radical Islam. The Iranian Mojahedin* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), pp. 103-04. Abrahamian's thesis withstanding, there is little doubt that the ran-and-file of the organization were drawn to its teachings largely owing to the far more widely disseminated teachings of Taliqani and Shari'ati.

⁵⁰ Norton, *Amal*, pp.33-59.

their ideas, cultivate a constituency within the clerical hierarchies as well as among the religious masses, and remain relevant in a climate of change resisting forces of politicization. Cantwell Smith's oft-quoted remark: "If liberals [Islamic modernists] are so strong, why is liberalism [Islamic modernism] so weak?"⁵¹ refers exactly to this marginalization and passing of Islamic modernism. For, modernism, by and large, found itself borrowing from the West rather than changing Islam; and moreover, the modernists increasingly resorted to addressing social grievances and representing the needs of political alliances rather than speaking for Islam as a faith. The National Front roots of both the Liberation Movement and Mujahidin-i Khalq in Iran is indicative of symbiotic relations between modernism and political dissent, even suggesting a conscious use of modernist ideas for purposes of political action.⁵²

Moreover, modernism by acceding to alien worldviews evolved into a force, not within traditional Islam, but outside of it and hence in competition to it—a fact which foreclosed the prospects of the movement within the pale of Islamic life and thought. In addition, seeking to break the impasse created by its intellectual and social limitations, modernism became a force for social change and a contender in the political arena—a movement concerned with aspects of the lives of Muslims, and not a school of thought interested in their spiritual destiny.

Modernism and Revivalism: A Causal Linkage?

The intellectual and institutional limitations that constrained the influence of Islamic modernism on religious thought and catalyzed the politicization of modernism, have also acted to influence the religiopolitical trends that seemingly lie beyond the purview of modernism and stand opposed to its liberal principles, i.e., revivalism. The existence of a linkage between modernism and revivalism is of particular significance since it implies that not only is modernism unable to prevent revivalism, but may in fact promote it. The possibility of a causal linkage and continuity between modernism and revivalism is raised, in the first place, by the similarities in the precepts of the two approaches to religious exegesis.

The aforementioned tendencies of Islamic modernism, namely, iconoclasm, *vis-à-vis* history, an exoteric and interpretive reading of religion, reduction of religion to rituals on the one hand and politics on the other, an apologetic posture before the West are also evident in revivalism. So much so that such towering ideologists of Islamic revivalism as Sayyid Abu'l-A'la Mawdudi or

⁵¹ Cantwell Smith, *Islam*, p.61.

⁵² Chehabi, *Iranian Politics*.

Sayyid Qutb might just as easily be classified as modernists.⁵³ The feature that the two approaches to Islam share, and that is most salient politically and religiously, is the assimilation and absorption of Western ideas and worldviews, which are fused into what is tantamount to a "Western philosophy of Islam." Just as the modernists have viewed Islam through the prism of Western liberalism and, on occasion, historical dialectics, latter-day revivalist thinkers have sidestepped liberalism and embraced Hegel and Marx. Modern revivalist movements have espoused social thought and political programs which, despite their Islamic veneer, are positivist and dialectical in approach, with their putative anti-Westernism being relegated only to the realm of politics, leaving all other aspects of Muslim life more open than ever to Western influence.

Despite their xenophobic opposition to Western political machinations and cultural influence in Muslim societies, revivalist thinkers have borrowed extensively from Western political and philosophical doctrines in elaborating their own ideas. The very terms "Islamic ideology" or "Islamic revolution," and the historical processes which produce them are Western concepts, and prove the modernist predilection of revivalism.⁵⁴ Moreover, revivalist thought has accepted the positivist foundations of Western science and technology as universal truths which arch over indigenous worldviews, religious outlooks or cultural systems.⁵⁵ As a result, revivalists have sought to reconstruct Muslim societies based on Western philosophical and scientific precepts that have been shrouded in religious ethics.⁵⁶ The works of Khumayni or Mawdudi, while seeking to free Muslims of Western political and cultural influence, borrow indiscriminately from Western political doctrines ranging from democracy to revolution to historical dialectics to republic, and accept positivist science in order to confirm the validity of their message.

The linkage between modernism and revivalism goes beyond resemblances of ideas and affinity of purpose. There exists a more direct causal link between the two. Islamic modernism was the first systematic response by Muslims to the realities confronting Muslims in the face of the increasing Western presence in their midst. Therefore, it had and continues to have a lasting influence on all responses provided by Muslims to the challenge of the West.

⁵³ See Binder, *Islamic Liberalism*.

⁵⁴ It is important to note that revivalist thought even if not immediately Western, in its philosophical orientations by rationalizing and innovating religious thought has nudged faith along modernist lines. See for instance, Said Amir Arjomand, "Revolution in Shi'ism," in William Roff (ed.), *Islam and the Political Economy of Meaning* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1987), pp. 111-13; and Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, "The Politics of An Islamic Movement: The Jama'at-i Islami of Pakistan," Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Political Science, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1991, chs. 3-4.

⁵⁵ See for instance, Ziauddin Sardar, *Islamic Futures; the Shape of the Ideas to Come* (New York: Mansell Publishing, 1985).

⁵⁶ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Present Tendencies, Future Trends," in Marjorie Kelly (ed.), *Islam, the Religious and Political Life of A World Community* (New York: Praeger, 1984), pp. 275-92.

This effect was neither as positive, then or now, nor as apparent as Western scholarship on the subject suggests. The modernist impact was rather in that Islamic thought could not remain oblivious to the legacy of a trend such as modernism altogether.⁵⁷ In this regard the main impact of modernism on the future of Islamic thought, and more significantly revivalism, was threefold.

First, modernism initiated the criticism of traditional Islam and opened the door to the possibility of interpreting the religion based on a worldview alien to it. This aspect of modernism culminated in the idealization of the reign of the Rightly-Guided caliphs in the case of Sunni Islam, and the exoteric and political dimensions of the Imamate and the doctrine's social functions in the case of Shī'ism.

Second, modernism set a precedence for iconoclasm *vis-à-vis* history, down-playing Islam's civilizational content, and elaboration of Islam in terms of rituals and practices and as a compendium of ideas directed at achieving an ideal that revealed a proclivity for social action.⁵⁸

A number of scholars have taken a less drastic view of the issues at hand. Fazlur Rahman has argued that the interpretive impetus of modernism is merely a "criticism" that is necessary for all intellectual progress.⁵⁹ Eaton, conversely, dismisses modernism, part and parcel, as an impulsive effort on the part of a number of Muslims to excuse their religion for its seeming lack of development, which was, in principle accepted as the desirable path of history.⁶⁰ Eaton affords the modernists no historical significance beyond their immediate intellectual environment.

Yet, the modernist exegesis has been of greater significance than either of the two above views suggests, especially with regards to the formulation of revivalist thought. The modernist discourse, discerning between scripture and its historical manifestations, reason and faith, and ritual and its cultural accretions directly influenced the revivalist interpretation of Islam. For, a religious community made conscious of an ideal past and compelled to believe in the decadence of its history and hence present reality cannot sustain its identity

⁵⁷ In fact, revivalism in the works of the like of Mawdudi or Khomeini was often articulated around debates stirred by modernists. Mawdudi's *Tafhimu 'l-Qur'an* (Understanding the Qur'an) (Lahore: 1932-79) was a response to Sayyid Ahmad Khan's humanist commentary on the Qur'an, *Tafsiru 'l-Qur'an* (Commentary on the Qur'an) (Lahore: 1880-95). Similarly Khomeini's earliest treatises on politics were prompted by secularist refutations of Shī'ism like Ahmad Kasravi or reformist exercises such as those of Sanglaji; see, Said Amir Arjomand, "Traditionalism in Twentieth-Century Iran," in Said Amir Arjomand (ed.) *From Nationalism to Revolutionary Islam* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1984), p. 205.

⁵⁸ This tendency is most evident in revivalism's rejection of the *de facto* separation of religion and politics in Islamic history; see, Hamid Dabashi, "Symbiosis of Religious and Political Authorities in Islam," in Thomas Robbins and Ronald Robertson (eds.), *Church-State Relations: Tensions and Transitions* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1987), pp. 197-98.

⁵⁹ Rahman, *Islam and Modernity*, pp. 120-21.

⁶⁰ Eaton, *Islam and the Destiny of Man*, p. 230

and structure of thought save for an active expectation of the future, wherein the restoration of the distant past and eradication of the tyrannical writ of history would spell a glorious denouement to an otherwise pitiful present.

Hourani writes of 'Abduh that: "The key to his defense of Islam, indeed to all his thought about it, was a certain conception of true religion: a distinction between what was essential and unchanging in it and what was inessential and could be changed without damage."⁶¹ 'Abduh's efforts were directed at "purifying" Islam and restoring its "rational" essence by discarding its "inessential" aspects. The distinction made by 'Abduh between the essential and the inessential aspects of Islam finds resonance in the revivalist notions of "true Islam," *jahiliyya* (pagan society), and *takfir* (declaring blasphemous).⁶² For instance, Sayyid Qutb's assertion, "I have found the Qur'an," reiterates the same distinctions between various aspects of religion with view to a perceived objective that was evident in the works of 'Abduh. Moreover, the apologetic posture towards the reality of Islam and the heightened expectation of the future that existed in 'Abduh's promise of reform, can also be seen in Qutb's refutation of the Islamic life and thought of his days, and in his idealization of the "Islamic Revolution."⁶³

More importantly, both modernists and revivalists associated what they deemed to be inessential with traditional Islamic thought and institutions. Hence, Sayyid Ahmad Khan wrote: "...I acknowledge... the original religion of Islam which God and the Messenger have disclosed, not the religion which [sic] the *ulamā'* and the preachers have fashioned."⁶⁴ Sayyid Qutb echoes this view, "All that surrounds us is *jahiliyya*.... even what we consider Islamic education, Islamic sources, Islamic philosophy and Islamic thought—all of it is the product of *jahiliyya*."⁶⁵ Interestingly, the modernist yearning for the "original Islam of God and the Messenger" reveals the same revivalist posture of relying only on the Qur'an and possibly a number of Prophetic Tradition, on which revivalist thought is based.

This line of reasoning, furthermore, led both modernism and revivalism to idealize the future as the manifestation of their vision of "true" religion. In the Sunni world, however, the mobilization of the promise of the future remained implicit in the modernists' efforts to restore Islam to its lost grandeur. It emerged as an active goal in later revivalist trends advocating radical social

⁶¹ Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, p. 145

⁶² Yvonne Haddad, "The Qur'anic Justification for An Islamic Revolution: The View of Sayyid Qutb," in *The Middle East Journal*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (Winter, 1983), pp. 16-19.

⁶³ Idem, "Sayyid Qutb: Ideologue of Islamic Revival," in John L. Esposito (ed.), *Voices of Resurgent Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 69.

⁶⁴ From Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, "Islam: the Religion of Reason and Nature," Christian W. Troll (trans.), in John Donohue and John Esposito (eds.), *Islam in Transition, Muslim Perspectives* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 42.

⁶⁵ Haddad, "Sayyid Qutb," p. 85.

change and revolution. In Shīʿī Islam, conversely, the activation of the creed's dormant millenarian tendencies—the *intizār* (awaiting) for the apocalypse and the reign of the Hidden Imam—are not only a component of Shīʿī revivalist thought, but have also been a hallmark of Shīʿī modernist works such as those of Musa Sadr or ʿAlī Shariʿati.⁶⁶

The modernist and revivalist approaches to assimilation of Western ideas, however, differ somewhat. While modernists have openly hailed Western ideas and acknowledged their adoption, revivalists have denied any association with Western ideas and have condemned all aspects of the Western civilization. Hourani writes: "To show that Islam can be reconciled with modern thought...was one of ʿAbduh's major purposes."⁶⁷ In contrast to the modernist position, revivalist thinkers such as Qutb, while arguing for revolution, a term understood in its Western connotations throughout his works, and depicting the historical role of Islam in noticeably modernist terms: "The mission of Islam is always to propel...development, and progress..." consciously disassociates Islam and, by implication, his own views from Western thought.

The third implication of modernist thought for revivalism was the fact that modernism set the tone for extensive reinterpretation of religious sources with view to sociopolitical imperatives. The example of Sangilaji's exegesis is very much reflected in Khumayni's revolution in Shīʿism. The outlook of the two thinkers, no doubt, was different, but in initiating wide-scale changes in the Shīʿī worldview through interpretive reading of religious sources—breaking the boundaries of traditional Shīʿī scholarship and jurisprudence—their approaches were very similar.

More to the point, the modernist exegesis has laid the foundations for a revivalist one. Modernism's travails with politics had both politicized religious symbols and doctrines and set a precedent for doing so, hence facilitating the rise of revivalism. The linkage between mobilization of religious symbols in Shīʿī modernist expositions and their later manifestation in revivalist thought and *praxis* is highly instructive in this regard. To cite one example, the works of Shariʿati, Taliqani and Musa Sadr dealt extensively with the theme of Imam Husayn's rebellion, utilizing the "paradigm of Karbala" in formulating a dialectic interpretation of Shīʿī history, and in converting quiescent religious observance into radical political praxis. Ajami writes that Musa Sadr was deeply impressed by the tale of Karbala,⁶⁸ which he interpreted in dialectic terms, and with view to activating its latent political message:

⁶⁶ Ajami, *Vanished Imam*, pp. 119-20, and ʿAlī Shariʿati, "Intizar, the Religion of Protest," Mangol Bayat (trans.), in Donohue and Esposito, *Islam*, pp. 297-304.

⁶⁷ Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, p. 144.

⁶⁸ Ajami, *Vanished Imam*, pp. 142-43.

This revolution did not die in the sands of Karbala.... It is a deposit placed in our hands so that we may profit from it, that we draw out of it a new source of reform... a new revolution...⁶⁹

Taliqani and Shari'ati's writings went even further in formulating a dialectic view of Shi'i history, wherein the Battle of Karbala acts as both the first clash between the polar forces which form and propel the dialectic history, and yet serve as a model for the revolution that will finalize the process. Shari'ati writes in this regard:

Finally, the responsibility of every Shi'i, in any generation, from any background, is to recognize the "revolution of Karbala," "Martyrdom of Husayn" ...and the materialization of all this. All in all, it means not to worship 'Ali' as an idol...but to be like 'Ali, live like 'Ali and die like 'Ali.⁷⁰

Similar attempts at mobilizing Shi'i religious symbols were evident in the works of the founders of Mujahidin-i Khalq. Ahmad Raza'i's arguments in his *Nihzat-i husayni* (Husayn's Movement) closely parallel views expressed by Shari'ati in explicating a vision of Shi'i activism.⁷¹ Raza'i's assertion: "martyrdom is the spiritual ascension (*mī'raj*—reference to the Prophet's Nocturnal Journey) of a revolutionary" best captures the fusion of religious symbols and the dialectic struggle for a sociopolitical revolution in later Shi'i modernist thought.⁷²

While the mobilization of the "paradigm of Karbala" and the theme of martyrdom was a hallmark of a number of Shi'i modernist works, these themes were conspicuously absent in early Shi'i revivalist thought. Khumayni's *Vilayat-i faqih*, which acted as the exordium for Shi'i revivalist thinking, for instance, contains only ten references to Imam Husayn, one of which pertains to a chain of *hadith*, one to "enjoining the good, and forbidding the reprehensible," and eight to Husayn's struggle against Umayyad rule. In these eight references there is no indepth examination of the tale of Karbala, and moreover, Khumayni's approach to Husayn's uprising barely differs from the traditional treatment of the subject in that the emphasis is placed on the fact that Husayn's adversary was an oppressor, a monarch, and an enemy of Islam. *Vilayat-i faqih* makes no direct references to Karbala, nor does it contain an analysis of the

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

⁷⁰ Shari'ati, *Shi'ah*, p. 267.

⁷¹ Shari'ati, *Tushayyu-i 'alavi*, p. 22. In this passage Shari'ati contrasts "red" Shi'ism with "black" Shi'ism, where red stands for action—voice and protest—and black signifies quiescence and *gha* (mourning)—exit and pacifism. Red Shi'ism approximates the definition of 'Alid and black Safavid Shi'ism.

⁷² Ahmad Raza'i, *Nihzat-i husayni* (Husayn's Movement) (np.: Mujahidin-i Khalq Publications, 1976), pp. 2 and 35.

Husayn's cause, nor an examination of his martyrdom.⁷³ The greater attention paid to these themes during the course of the Iranian revolution, and later on in Lebanon, was a result of the mobilization of these themes by modernists and followed their example in this regard.

The umbilical chord tying modernism to revivalism in Shī'ism is also evident in a different context. There has existed an important corollary to Sangilaji's discourse which has since the 1930s become a central feature of Shī'ī modernism, and more importantly, Shī'ī revivalism, namely, "Sunnification" of Shī'ism. Sangilaji's views on reform went hand-in-hand with down-playing Shī'ī flag-waving and bringing the faith closer to Sunnism. The very structure of his discourse—a reformation of Shī'ism—his rationalization of Shī'ī faith, and rejection of popular religious practices implied a more Sunni-like approach to religious faith. His approach ultimately hinted of a more conciliatory posture towards Sunnism.

This strain also surfaced in Sharī'ati's thought, who openly relied on Sunni sources and idealized Abu Dharr, de-emphasized disagreements over succession to the Prophet, discouraged popular Shī'ī practices, and rationalized faith. More to the point, elements within the Qum establishment and the revolutionary elite, who otherwise held Sangilaji and also Sharī'ati in low esteem, were swayed by the modernists' Sunni tendencies. This trend first emerged in the works of the young Shī'ī activist, Ni'matullah Salihi Najafabadi, and notably, in his rendition of Husayn's biography, *Shahid-i javid* (Immortal Martyr). In this work Salihi rejected the preordained nature of Husayn's martyrdom and the infallibility of the Imams—a cornerstone of Shī'ī faith which clearly distinguishes from Sunnism. Husayn's rebellion against Caliph Yazid had not been a religious event, so much as a political statement—a view which is clearly at odds with traditional Shī'ī beliefs and smacks of Sunni influences. From this Salihi concluded that the legitimacy of the institution of Imamate is not essentially religious, but political; it is imbedded in the people rather than in God.⁷⁴ It was a populist and political institution closer to the Sunni view of authority and leadership than the traditional Shī'ī one. The *ulamā'* took issue with Salihi's innovations and Sunni proclivity. A revolutionary group associated with Najafabadi, and popularly referred to as the Hadafris (Those with Aim), and more pejoratively as "Wahhabi," became embroiled in arguments with traditional *ulamā'* in Isfahan, and was implicated in the assassination of two vehemently anti-

⁷³ See, Imam Khomeini, *Islam and Revolution* Hamid Algar (ed. and trans.) (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1981), pp. 17, 31, 35, 75, 108, 113, 117, 119, 121, 133. It should be noted that treatment of Karbala did feature in less central revivalist works such as that of Ni'matullah Salihi Najafabadi, *Shahid-i javid* (Immortal Martyr) (Qum: 1350/1971), but even then it dated after similar treatments in modernist works.

⁷⁴ Ahmad Kazemi Moussavi, "A New Interpretation of the Theory of *Vilayet-i Faqih*," in *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (January, 1992), p. 101.

Sunni ayatullahs. Pro-Sunni proclivities were also to be found in the ideas of such prominent revolutionary thinkers as Ayatullah Muḥammad Husayn Bihishti and Hujjatu'l-Islam Muḥammad Mufattih. Bihishti's views, and his putative links to the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood had raised the ire of the Shī'ī divines to such an extent that, the eminent Ayatollah Seyyed Sadr al-Din Jazayeri publicly damned him. The central role of the two in the Revolution of 1978-79 did not diminish the Shī'ī divines' apprehension of their Sunni tendencies. When the two rose to the helm in the Revolutionary Council in 1979, the Grand Ayatullah Mar'ashi formally registered his unhappiness with "closet Sunnis" governing the affairs of the now Shī'ī state with Khumayni, and a number of religious leaders in Tehran made their participation in the Constituent Assembly (*Majlis-i Khubragan*) contingent on its exclusion of Bihishti and Mufattih.⁷⁵ Shī'ī modernism has, therefore, had a Sunni component which, interestingly, has been most clearly manifest among revivalist *'ulamā'*, attesting to the influence of the modernist discourse on revivalist thinking.

The foregoing argument suggests a great deal more affinity between modernism and revivalism than the advocates of "Islamic reform" are willing to admit. Not only has revivalism borrowed from and followed the example of modernism in mobilizing religious symbolisms, but as the examination of the historical record indicates, there has existed direct linkages between the two schools of thought. Modernist movements, as has been already mentioned, possess only a tenuous existence. While their propensity for politicization has been more apparent; it is important to note that they have also revealed a tendency for producing revivalism on the one hand and secularism on the other,⁷⁶ what attests to the untenable nature of modernist discourse.

Secularism has been a much vaunted ideal of modernization theorists, who argue that progress is predicated upon privatization of faith and secularization of society and culture. In the eyes of those who favor secularism, modernism should be encouraged exactly on account of the fact that it will inevitably be replaced with secularism. The obvious caveat here is that, modernism can produce revivalism just as readily as it can lead to secularism. The dynamics of disintegration of the modernist discourse will further elucidate this point.

Egyptian modernism after a generation broke up into the secularist nationalist politics of the British Protectorate period, and the greater scripturalism of Rashid Rida and the Salafiyyah movement.⁷⁷ Indian modernism, similarly, dissipated into secular intellectual trends of the likes of

⁷⁵ Personal interview with Grand Ayatullah Sayyid Mahdi Ha'iri Yazdi, Washington, D C , April 1990.

⁷⁶ In this regard see Geertz engaging analysis in Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed. Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia* (Chicago University of Chicago Press, 1968), pp. 56-89

⁷⁷ Eric Davis, "Ideology, Social Class and Islamic Radicalism in Modern Egypt," in Arjomand, *From Nationalism*, p. 135.

Chiragh 'Ali, and yet prompted a revival of Islam in the form of Ahl-i Hadith, Brailwi, Deoband and Nadwi traditions.⁷⁸ In the case of Shī'ī modernism although it is still too early to make definitive conclusions, the specter of similar disintegrative tendencies loom large on the horizon.

The works of Baqir al-Sadr, from his philosophical treatises in *Falsafatuna*, interpretative exercises in *al-Mursil wa'l-risalah* (Messenger and the Message) and his essays on economy and society in his *Iqtisaduna* to his doctrine of "governance by the *marja'i taqlid*"⁷⁹ traverse the intellectual spectrum from modernism to revivalism. In Lebanon the Amal, in the early 1980s, splintered into a radical Islamic wing and a confessional-pragmatic one. Although this division was in part the product of Iranian machinations, it fed on the existing schisms and fissures within Amal.⁸⁰ In Iran, by the late 1970s, both Bazargan and his colleagues in Liberation Movement and Mutahhari had shifted their stance and moved closer to that of Khumayni. While such a move on the part of Bazargan may have been due to political maneuvering,⁸¹ in the case of Mutahhari it suggested a change of doctrinal nature. For, Mutahhari's "road to Damascus" was, interestingly enough, a reflection of the intellectual clashes of a reluctant modernist with the heterodoxy which was inherent in the full-fledged Marxian modernism of Shari'ati. These confrontations first led to Mutahhari's resignation from the Husayniyyah-i Irshad, and later on placed him at the forefront of Qum's crusade against Shari'ati and his ideas. Mutahhari moved from debates on philosophy and religion with Henry Corbin to mobilizing the *ulamā'* along sociopolitical issues in order to respond and even serve as alternative to "Shari'atism."⁸²

On the other side of the picture, Shī'ī modernism has also shown a tendency for secularism. As mentioned earlier, the rise in the fortunes of Amal over the past decade has pushed the movement from a religious identity towards a sectarian/confessional one, from a Shī'ī party to a national movement for the rights and aspirations of Lebanese Shī'is. The divestment of the Islamic Amal and the rise of pragmatic secular leaders to the helm in the organization following the disappearance of Musa Sadr confirmed the secularizing tendency in Amal's development.⁸³ In Iran the same tendency was evident in

⁷⁸ On these schools of thought see Barbara D. Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India, the Deoband, 1860-1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982).

⁷⁹ Sayyid Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr, *Lamhah tahririyah 'an mashru' dastur al-jumhuriyyah al-islamiyah* (A Cursory Review of the Draft of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic) (Beirut: 1979).

⁸⁰ Norton, *Amal*, pp. 100-02.

⁸¹ Mahdi Bazargan, *Inqilab-i iran dar du harakat* (Iranian Revolution in Two Movements) (Tehran: 1363/1984).

⁸² See "The Reminiscences of Seyyed Hossein Nasr" in an interview with Hosein Ziya'i, 10/1982 and 1/1983, pp. 130-31, in the Oral History Collection of the Foundation for Iranian Studies.

⁸³ Helena Cobban, *The Shi'a Community and the Future of Lebanon* (Washington, D.C.: American Institute of Islamic Affairs, 1985), p. 7.

political groupings that were based on the ideas of Taliqani and Shari'ati.⁸⁴ Excerpts from the following letter by Mujtaba Taliqani, a member of the Mujahidin-i Khalq, to his father, the renowned modernist cleric is rather telling in this regard:

In the past two years, however, I have started to study Marxism.... Now I am convinced we must turn to the working class. But to organize the working class we must reject Islam...⁸⁵

The conclusion reached by Mujtaba Taliqani eventually culminated in the emergence of the secular Marxist Paykar Organization from the midst of the Mujahidin.

While the advent of secularism may be received with an accolade, such is not likely to be the case if modernism serves as a midwife to revivalism. The possibility of a revivalist end for the modernist experiment should qualify the enthusiasm which the expectation of imminent secularism may engender. For, contrary to the expectation of the advocates of modernism, the impact of modernity on tradition is not one of a facile or direct replacement of the latter by the former, or a happy fusion of the two; the passing of tradition (if it is to be) follows its provocation and reassertion.⁸⁶

Modernism and the Structure of Religious Thought in Islam

The disintegrative tendency of modernism is inherent in its message, and in its posture towards the Islamic belief system and the place of religious Truth in the schema of things. Modernism threatens to break the universal sovereignty of religion and the monopoly of faith over absolute Truth. By accepting the validity of worldviews which lie outside of the purview of religion, and consequently admonishing aspects of faith, modernism disturbs the psychological and social balance that governs the relations between the believer and his faith.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Such predilection is clearly evident in the intellectual development of Mujahidin-i Khalq, where attempts at fusing Shi'ism and Marxism set the tone for eventually subordinating faith to the needs of the revolutionary struggle. In *Sharh-i ta'sis va tarikhchih-i va vaqay'i-i sazman-i mujahidin* (Account of the Foundation and History of the Mujahidin) (Tehran 1979), the organization declared.

After years of extensive study into Islamic history and Shi'i ideology, we have reached the firm conclusion that Islam, especially Shi'i Islam, will play a major role in inspiring the masses to join the revolution

Quoted and discussed in Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), pp. 490-91.

⁸⁵ The more complete text of this letter as well as a discussion of this transformation can be found in *ibid*, pp. 493-95.

⁸⁶ Hannah Arendt, "Tradition and the Modern Age," in Edith Kurzweil and William Phillips (eds.), *Writers and Politics: A Partisan Review Reader* (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983), p. 27

⁸⁷ See Michael Walzer, *The Revolution of Saints, A Study in the Origins of Radical Politics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), pp. 9-10

The dynamics of this process begin with the subjection of religious thinking to Western rationalist and humanist thought. Rationalism as understood in the West and propagated in the philosophical circles since the eighteenth century was a cornerstone of Islamic modernist thought and was assimilated into its thinking by juxtaposing it with Mu'tazilite emphasis on reason.⁸⁸ Humanism was also preponderant in Islamic modernism, although to a lesser extent, and found manifestation in such formulations as Muḥammad Iqbal's fusion of Nietzschean philosophy with the sufi doctrine of *insan-i kamil* (Perfect Man).⁸⁹

Yet, modern-day rationalism and humanism are by nature secular, or at least purport to secularism. This is even true of neo-Shī'ī modernism of Surush which has been unfolding within the structure of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Modernists distinguish between faith and reason, relegating the former to the realm of superstition and viewing the latter as the tool for discerning truths that are understood in secular and anthropocentric terms. The subjection of religious thought to rationalism and humanism, therefore, has posed an explicit challenge to the very notion of faith and the inviolability of the tenets of religion. By seeking to justify the teachings of Islam in light of rationalism, Islamic modernism invariably challenges and breaks down the relations between creed and community. Religion therefore ceases to play its role in the individual and collective psychology of the followers of modernism.

The consequence of disrupting the nexus between man and the Divine has been twofold. On the one hand, it has disentangled Muslims from the all-encompassing web of their faith, for rationalist faith is no longer faith but merely a justification for the existence of Islam, and hence sets the believer on a course the result of which is secularism.⁹⁰ On the other hand, it dissociates Muslims from faith as it exists in traditional settings and opens them to Western perspectives and sets them on a course the result of which is a syncretic and idealized interpretation and understanding of Islam.⁹¹ For, the breakdown of religion's omnipotence does not *ipso facto* shake the belief in the symbols and teachings of Islam. Rather, it initiates the search for an alternate template, which in view of the doubts that modernism has cast on the ways of the past and the expectation which it has created regarding the future, becomes one of reconstruction of the universal sovereignty of religion, which is none other than its idealization and revival. Given the import that modernism has placed on the exoteric, the infusion of modern/Western ideas into Islamic thought that it has facilitated, and the sociopolitical crises in the societies in question, the idealization and revival of Islam has occurred along political lines

⁸⁸ Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, pp. 142-50, and Ahmad, *Islamic Modernism*, pp. 53-54.

⁸⁹ Nasr, *Traditional Islam*, pp. 205 and 208.

⁹⁰ Syed Muḥammad Al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism* (Kuala Lumpur: Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia, 1978), pp. 91-126.

⁹¹ Shayegan, *Qu'est-ce qu'une révolution*, pp. 124-249.

and channeled its energies into the kind of social engineering that will produce its religiopolitical ideal.

The philosophical underpinnings of modernism, moreover, set in motion processes that will inevitably disintegrate the original body of thought. By challenging the sacrosanct universality of religion, modernism opens the door for change. It advocates the reinstatement of *ijtihad* (in the case of Sunni Islam), the institutionalization of interpretation and, if need be, innovation. In fact, change in, and not preservation and continuity of, Islam has been the concern of the modernists. From a creed advocating change, modernism can but evolve into a creed that stands for nothing other than change.⁹²

Having no philosophical and intellectual mainstay of its own, the winds of change bifurcate the pellucid structure of modernism into Western secularism or "Islam." Yet, the Islamic tendency born of modernism is a different Islam and stands in contrast to the living tradition of Islamic thought. It is positivist, rationalist, apologetic, and divorced from its own foundations, save for rituals. Having set in motion a tension between faith and reason, modernism has initiated an era in Islamic thought where the reign of reason, whether in the guise of reform or reassertion, challenges tradition and shapes a novel Islamic identity, and which lies at the heart of the polarized and precarious politics of today's Muslim societies.

The fact that Islamic modernism has been elaborated, advocated, propagated and adhered to by laymen, lower *'ulamā'* and religious leaders of peripheral significance in the acephalous hierarchies of Muslim societies, that they have not been well-versed in Islamic philosophy or at times even the religious sciences, has consolidated the Western essence of modernism and revealed its heterodox essence more rapidly and hence has set it apart from traditional Islam more clearly—an eventuality that has aided the rise of new interpretations of Islam along political and revivalist lines and, in the case of Shī'ī modernism, temporalized and politicized the intellectual essence of the movement. The same tendencies have also acted to sanction secularism in the decades since modernism was first adumbrated.

While the power and influence of the resultant revivalist trends lie in their political challenge to existing sociopolitical orders, their inner structures as well as religious worldviews continue to be predicated on the modernist discourse. The scripturalist and ascetic approach to faith, based on Western worldviews and with primarily political objectives which characterize revivalist thinking, are closely associated with the modernist

⁹² Kerr, *Islamic Reform*, p. 209, and Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Life and Thought* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1981), pp. 13-14.

experience.⁹³ Hence, revivalist thought whether in the form of Sayyid Qutb's dichotomy between the *umma* and the *jahiliyya* society, Mawdudi's exegeses on revolution and the ideal of "theo-democracy," or Khomeini's Shi'ism of the *mustaz'af* (downtrodden), active *intizār* and a *ulamā'*-led crusade for the *parousia* all attest to the continuity between modernism and revivalism. In both their dialectical approach to social and political analysis and use of Western concepts in depicting the dynamics of change, these revivalist thinkers have revealed modernist tendencies. Yet, having begun where modernism left off, revivalism is likely to continue its push for modernization of religious structures, not through a discourse, but by imposing its vision on society wherever successful. This process, moreover, will not be limited to incorporation of Western concepts and ideas into Islamic thought, but will be manifest in revivalism's promise to rationalize the structure of religious thought and its associated institutions—what Weber saw as the impetus for modernizing change in religious bodies.

Conclusion

Islamic modernism as a movement of religious reform, despite the promise that it continues to hold for many, has thus far revealed shortcomings that cast doubt on its viability. Islamic modernism has failed to inculcate Islamic thought with the ideal of reform and has proved unable to institutionalize the principle of change in religious thought and institutions in Muslim societies. Modernism has, moreover, proved to be impermanent, unable to challenge rival religiopolitical forces or resist politicization—moving from issues pertaining to religious reform to concerns for sociopolitical change. It has also acted as a means for introducing Islamic values into politics, rather than depoliticizing Islam as some advocates of modernism have expected it to do.

Finally, revivalism has revealed a great deal more affinity and continuity with modernism than is commonly believed to be the case. Revivalist thought has borrowed from the modernist discourse and, in certain instances, revivalism has descended from or has been provoked by modernism. Moreover, revivalism has adopted Western worldviews and served as a channel for assimilation of Western ideas into Islam. While the political program of revivalism, or its particular reliance on religious ethics, may distinguish it from the more common view of modernism, at closer examination the two share much in their

⁹³ An interesting instance of this direct linkage is the relation between Shari'ati and Sayyid 'Ali Khamana'i, a leading member of Iran's revolutionary elite, and currently the country's supreme spiritual leader. Khamana'i was a member of Shari'ati's circle in Mashhad, and has been an ardent advocate of his views; see, The Reminiscences of Habib Bahar in an interview with Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, 5/9 and 16 and 6/16/1988, p. 58, in the Oral History of Iran Collection of the Foundation for Iranian Studies.

grounding in Western thought, syncretic outlook on religion, reliance on the fundamentals of faith, and idealization of the promise of the future based on the image of the past.

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**"ORTHODOXY" AND "HERESY"
IN MEDIEVAL ISLAM:
AN ESSAY IN REASSESSMENT¹**

"Nevertheless, not only the scholars' environment at large but their explicit pre-commitments, which brought the greater of the scholars to their enquiry in the first place, have determined the categories with which they have undertaken their studies. Only by a conscious and well-examined understanding of the limits of these precommitments and of what is possible within and beyond them can we hope to.... reach any direct appreciation of major cultural traditions we do not share—and perhaps even of traditions we do share..."

Marshall Hodgson. *The Venture of Islam*,
Vol. 1, p. 28

Dealing with Islamic intellectual and social history almost invariably presupposes the adoption of an approach in which the binary opposition between an "orthodoxy" and a "heresy" has an important and, sometimes, even a preeminent role to play. In fact, the development of Muslim societies is often seen as a constant struggle of "scripturalist" Islam against "heterodox" tendencies, often associated with allegedly "non-Islamic" influences. The above-mentioned dichotomy has been widely exploited by western Islamicists.² At the same time, some self-reflecting scholars in the West have sought to avoid its Eurocentric and pro-Christian implications. These scholars were equally opposed to the "two-tiered" model created by contemporary social anthropology that accentuated the dramatic disagreement between the "lettered" religious tradition and its popular version, viewed as "vulgarization". In their view, this model is especially confusing when indiscriminately applied to both contemporary and medieval Muslim societies.³ Such criticisms,

¹ A draft of this article was presented to the Islamic Seminar at the Institute for Advanced Study, School of Historical Studies, Princeton, NJ. I am grateful to my colleagues in the Institute for Advanced Study and Princeton University who took part in the discussion of this article, and made valuable criticisms and suggestions which I tried to take into account while finalizing the text for publication.

² The most striking example of such consistently dichotomous perspective is, perhaps, H.A.R. Gibb's *Mohammedanism. An Historical Survey*. 2d ed., (London: Oxford University Press, 1972). See Chapter 7 of this book, characteristically entitled "Orthodoxy and Schism", pp. 73-85; also relevant is Chapter 8, pp. 86-99. In other contexts and to a lesser extent, the opposition between "orthodoxy" and "heresy" is present in such different studies as Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed. Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), especially pp. 8-19, 43-55, 62-74 etc; Ernest Gellner, *Saints of the Atlas* (Chicago: The University

however, were often pronounced in passing, as an unavoidable disclaimer. In any event, they have apparently failed to persuade the other, less wary, researchers to relinquish this handy and time-saving categorization, which has been successfully operating since the inception of European Islamology. There is hardly a scholarly work dealing with Islamic subjects that does not emphasize dramatic cleavages between the "orthodox" and the "heterodox", between the "genuine" religious tradition and its "corrupted surrogate". Persecutions of all manners of "sectarians" organized by the supporters of an "orthodox" creed have often been cited as a clear proof to the fact that in Islam, from the outset, there was an "authentic" religious dogma upheld by the majority of Muslims. Conformity to this hypothetical dogma has been seen by many Islamicists as the principle criterion in establishing "authenticity" of all other religious dogmas and persuasions.

My recent study of the fierce theological disputations between the members of Islamic school of thought known as *wahdat al-wujūd* (Unity of the Being) and those who opposed its tenets, confronted me with the necessity to choose a vantage point assuring a fair degree of impartiality in the treatment of this delicate topic over which contemporary Muslims continue to diverge.⁴ For almost seven centuries, the representatives of each faction involved in those disputations sought to portray themselves as champions of "true" Islam, while stigmatizing their opponents as "heretics" and even as "infidels." Thus, for me, the problem of defining what, in Islamic community, was nor-

of Chicago Press, 1969), 5-12 *et passim*; Idem. *Muslim Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 14-15, 42-43, 48-53, 61-63, 78-81 etc.; Nikkie R. Keddie (Ed.), *Scholars, Saints, and Sufis: Muslim Religious Institutions in the Middle East Since 1500* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 2-5; Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986), 3-4, 27, 149 etc. For a more recent example see: Ira Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), *passim*.

³ See, for example, Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam. Conscience and History in a World Civilization*, Vols. 1-3 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1974), I, 65-67, 350-351 etc.; Julian Baldick, *Mystical Islam: An Introduction to Sufism* (London: Tauris, 1989), 7 *et passim*; Stanislav Prozorov, "Muammad Ibn 'Abd al-Karīm ash-Shahrastānī," *Kniga o religiyakh i sektakh* (*The Book of Religions and Sects*) (Moscow: Nauka Publishers, 1984), Chast' I (Part 1), "Islam," 10-16; Tawfiq Ibrāhīm, "O kalame kak 'ortodoksal' noy filosofii' Islama" (On kalām as the "orthodox philosophy" of Islam), in *Narody Azii i Afriki* (Moscow: 1986), III, 205-212; Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints. Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 10-22. For the most profound treatment of the Western stereotypes built on the opposition between "orthodoxy" and "heresy" see Gerge Makdisi, "Hanbalite Islam," *Studies on Islam* Trans. and edited by M. Swartz (London: Oxford University Press, 1981), 216-274, but especially pp. 251-262.

⁴ For a contemporary debate over this teaching as well as the "orthodoxy" of its founder see: Th. Emil Homerin, "Ibn 'Arabi in the People's Assembly: Religion, Press, and Politics in Sadat's Egypt," in *The Middle East Journal* (Chicago: Summer, 1986), vol. 40, no. 3. 462-477; Kamāl Aḥmad 'Awn, *Kitāb al-futūḥāt al-Makkiyya wa-mā warā'ahu min ayādin Khaliyya*. (Ṭanṭa: Dār al-bashīr, 1409/1989). For the history of this debate see Alexander Knysh, "Ibn 'Arabi in the Later Islamic Tradition," in *Ibn 'Arabi: Volume of Translations and Studies Commemorating the 750th Anniversary of His Life and Work* (Brisbane, Australia: Element Book, 1992), pp. 307-327.

mally considered "orthodoxy" as contrasted to "heresy" has inevitably come to the fore.

There are several ways to cope with this problem. On the one hand, the researcher can simply adopt the doctrinal position upheld by one of the sides as the only "orthodox" one. Alternatively, he can adhere to the so-called "critical" approach, claiming academic objectivity. While it would be logical for the Western researcher to espouse the latter approach, its objectivity has recently been seriously questioned by the scholars of Muslim background. Some Muslim historians rightly point out that many western Islamicists even in our day continue to describe the Islamic civilization in interpretative categories borrowed from the history of European religion and science, and thus not entirely germane to the religious situation in the Muslim societies. Answering this criticism, I will tentatively make use of the categories and views elaborated by two medieval Muslim thinkers, who took pains to describe and to explain the wide variety of conflicting visions and understandings of Islamic religion they observed in the societies in which they lived. The observations made by two of these "insiders" will be supplemented by my own ideas regarding the criteria of "orthodoxy" versus "heresy" in medieval Islam.

As one may easily predict, the responses of Muslim scholars to the theological polyphony of the Islamic community were deeply colored by personal prejudices and doctrinal loyalties. Narrow factionalism and bigotry were common features found in the Muslim polemical treatises and in the so-called heresiographical⁵ works composed by al-Nawbakhtī, al-Ash'arī, 'Abd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī, and Ibn Ḥazm.⁶ This, however, does not mean that Muslim scholars did not endeavor to overcome the limits set by the sectarian loyalties, and to develop a broader vision of divergences within Islam. Al-Shahrastānī (d.548/1153) is a vivid, and by no means a typical example. In the introduction to his celebrated heresiographic treatise, *Kitāb al-milal wa 'l-ṇiḥal* (*The Book of Religions and Religious Sects*), he consciously proclaimed the principle of impartiality, which he then tried to implement in his detailed description of the views espoused by various Muslim theological schools. Indeed, al-Shahrastānī seems to have consistently eschewed the accusations of "heresy" (*zandaqa*) and "unbelief" (*kufr*) that pervaded the writings of his contemporaries and predecessors. One may presume that his irenic tone sprang from his profound knowledge of falsafa and esoteric cosmological doctrines⁷ either of which, for the most part, advocated tolerant

⁵ To avoid judgmental connotations implicit in this Christian term, some Russian Islamicists replaced it with a more neutral one, i.e. "doxography", "description of beliefs".

⁶ See Prozorov, *Kniga*, 16-18.

⁷ Wilferd Madelung, "Aḥ-Šahrastānī's Streitschrift gegen Avicenna und ihre Wiederlegung durch Naṣīr ad-Dīn at-Ṭūsī," in *Akten des VII Kongresses für Arabistik und Islamwissenschaft* (Göttingen, 1974). (Göttingen: 1976), 250-259; Prozorov, *Kniga*, 20.

religious attitudes and universalistic metaphysical outlooks. Al-Shahrastānī's broadness of vision, nevertheless, did not prevent him from providing a highly traditional explanation of the existence of numerous theological trends and "sects" in Islam. He simply referred to the famous *ḥadīth* report predicting that after the Prophet's death his Community would inevitably split into 73, or 72, in another version of the report, "sects" (*fīraq; sing. fīraqa*). Of these, only one would be able to achieve Salvation, while the rest were doomed to err, and, on the Day of Reckoning, destined to Hell.

Tackling the reasons for concrete disagreements between the *fīraq*, al-Shahrastānī suggested that they, in the final analysis, sprang from the different solutions to the four fundamental problems of Islamic religion:

1. Divine Attributes and *taḥwīd*.
2. Divine Justice and Divine Providence, with particular reference to the problem of Divine Predestination and human free will.
3. Divine Promise and Divine Threat and the concomitant questions of the "true" faith and the definition of the "faithful".
4. The Revelation, Prophetic Mission, and right to be the leader (imām) of the Muslim Community.

In al-Shahrastānī's opinion, all other differences among Muslims could be, in the final analysis, reduced to these four major problems, or, more precisely, to the ways in which they were solved by various groups of scholars. In fulfillment of his stated principle, the author of the *Kitāb al-mīlāl* invariably avoided to overtly criticize or judge the doctrines and theological schools he described.⁸ Therefore, it is sometimes difficult to grasp his own theological stance that appears to have been a rather odd mixture of Ash'arī kalām, falsafa, and, possibly, Ismā'īlī leanings. Al-Shahrastānī's latitudinarianism may have accounted for the fact that he chose not to impose on the reader any definite idea of "orthodoxy", simultaneously setting it off against all kinds of "heterodox" beliefs. Due to this detached position, he provided, perhaps unconsciously, a picture accentuating not the irrevocable confrontation between the religiously true and the religiously wrong, but rather the creative dialogue between the equally legitimate and independent interpretations of Islam, built on the same invariant premises. This never-ending dialogue between the putatively "straight" and putatively "deviating" tendencies, between religious conformism and free-thinking, between "mainstream" religious teachers and their "schismatic" opponents may be viewed as a "stimulating ferment" ensuring the development of Islam as a

⁸ Prozorov, *Kniga*, 29.

viable and adaptable ideological system.⁹ The idea al-Shahrastānī implicitly tried to convey is that, irrespective of the concrete nature of an "orthodox" tenet coming under "heterodox" criticism, the polemics that followed inevitably engendered a reformulation of the tenet at issue along the more precise and accurate lines. As a result of such reformulation the disputed tenet was to acquire further cogency, thus becoming less vulnerable in the face of future critical arguments. Seen from this vantage, the Muslim "orthodoxy" that has emerged as a result of those theological disputes could be defined as a final product of collective efforts exerted by Muslim thinkers of various, sometimes radically opposed, religious and political orientations.

Surely, al-Shahrastānī, with his irenic vision of religious divergences and confrontations, seems to have been a *rara avis* in the garden of medieval Muslim theology constantly ravaged by gushes of intolerance, mutual accusations of "unbelief", forced retractions, and attempts to enforce some kind of "orthodoxy" through violence and coercion. Practically every theological school of thought, every group of religious scholars upheld its own version of "orthodoxy", while accusing other groups of "delusion" and "heresy". In the absence of either ecumenical councils, or a centralized church authority capable of saying what an orthodox dogma would be, no religious teaching could formally be proclaimed "orthodox". Moreover, since medieval Islam knew no clergy, and men of religion were "not cut off from other believers by any form of ordination,"¹⁰ theoretically every Muslim was free to propagate his own vision of Islam, simultaneously condemning other visions as "corruptions" of the initially "pure" *Qur'anic* message and Prophetic testament (*sunna*). To disprove him, one could do little more than protest the validity of his interpretation and try to replace it with his own variant of "orthodoxy" that, objectively speaking, would be as legitimate as the previous one, because both had derived from the same normative sources.

Not surprisingly, the "heretical" writings of the "dubious" and "heterodox" thinkers such as, for instance, Ibn 'Arabī, would hardly contain fewer references to, and quotations from, the *Qur'ān* and the *Sunna* than a "strictly orthodox" text written by some contemporary Sunnī *faqīh*. In this respect, the former is as "scripturalist", as the "latter" and the difference lies in their *attitude* towards, and, *understanding* of, the Scripture.

The picture becomes more confusing, if one takes into account the fact that "a person could maintain a given viewpoint on the *imāmate*, one on questions of metaphysics or *kalām*, and one on *fiqh* law."¹¹ As Marshall Hodgson justly pointed out, "he [the Muslim] could be, for instance, a Jamā'ī-Sunnī, a

⁹ Prozorov, *Kniga*, 15-16.

¹⁰ Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, 7.

¹¹ See Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, I, 67.

Mu'tazilī, and a Ḥanafī".¹² One may add to this that, theoretically at least, he could also be a Sufi as regards his personal piety and spiritual life, and as a consequence, a member of some Sufi brotherhood. A legitimate question arises as to which of these numerous commitments should be considered crucial in establishing his "orthodoxy", whatever we take it to be.

Al-Shahrastānī, I assume, was well aware of this conundrum, when he sought to arrange Muslim *fīraq* in accordance with their approaches to the four major clusters of theological problems outlined in the introduction to his book. Basing himself on his stated principle, al-Shahrastānī discerned four major Muslim "sects": *qadariyya*, *ṣifātīyya*, *khawārīj*, and *Shī'a*. To these, he later added another three *fīraq*: *jabriyya*, *murjī'a*, and *ahl al-furū'*. His classification is revealing, because it radically disagrees with the usual European concept of a religious sect. This is primarily due to the conspicuous lack of an all-embracing "orthodox" dogma against which the loyalty of other teachings could be tested. One may argue that, being an Ash'arī *par excellence*, the author implies this doctrine to be the touchstone of "orthodox" outlook. But even if we were to ignore al-Shahrastānī's other doctrinal loyalties, Ash'arism would by no means be the dogma accepted by the entire Sunnī community, not at least in the author's lifetime.¹³ Neither, would it be accepted as "orthodox" by the majority of the Shī'a theologians.

For one thing, during many centuries, it was bitterly opposed by the *Ḥadīth folk* (*ahl al-ḥadīth*), an influential group of Sunnī 'ulamā', often portrayed by western researchers as staunch supporters of "Sunnī orthodoxy".

Secondly, the Ash'arīyya methods of argumentation were, from the very beginning, deeply rooted in the allegedly "heterodox" and "innovative" methods of speculation characteristic of the Mu'tazilīs. Consequently, as successors to the Mu'tazilīs, the Ash'arī scholars were treated with suspicion by many conservative Sunnī 'ulamā'. Later on, as if to substantiate the 'ulamā's worst suspicions, both theological trends practically converged in a harmonious theological synthesis that also came to include elements of *faṣaḥa* and speculative Sufism.

Thirdly, as has already been pointed out, Ash'arism, with its emphasis on metaphysics and *uṣūl*, simply could not serve as a comprehensive religious creed that would meet the variegated needs of its followers. It was, in fact, one, predominantly speculative, allegiance that did not encompass a number of others, conceivably, no less important (e.g., those related to legal religious practice, political and social ideals, personal piety and spirituality, etc.).

Furthermore, the Ash'arīs had no independent position on the problem of leadership of the Community (*imāma*), over which the early Muslims were

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ See, e.g., Makdisi, "Ash'arī and the Ash'arites in Islamic Religious History," in *Studia Islamica* (Paris: 1962), vol. 18; Makdisi, "Hanbalite Islam," *passim*, Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, I, 65-66; II, 175; Ibrahim, "O kalame."

split into three major warring parties: the Sunnīs, the Shīʿa, and the Khawārij. Many Ashʿarī theologians simply adopted the political views put forward by the Sunnī *Ḥadīth* folk. The latter, however, espoused a theological doctrine of their own that was at variance with one upheld by Ashʿarī divines. Besides, the *Ḥadīth* folk bitterly opposed Ashʿarī *kalām* speculations as an illegitimate and irresponsible inquiry into what should be accepted at face value, without any questioning (*bi-lā kayf*). Not surprisingly, the legitimacy of the Ashʿarī theological enterprise was seriously doubted by such prominent Sunnī authority as Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, who invariably censured the preoccupation with *kalām* on the part of some Sunnī scholars.¹⁴

More to the point, Ashʿarism did not possess a legal theory of its own. Despite the fact that since its inception it had usually been associated with the Shāfiʿī *madhhab*, it later was propagated by the scholars belonging to other legal schools, e.g., al-Baḳillānī, a Mālikī jurist, and Ibn ʿAqīl, a Ḥanafī, then a Ḥanbalī. As regards personal piety, many of the Ashʿarī theologians proved active proponents of Sufi doctrines, e.g., al-Sarrāj, al-Kalābādhī, al-Qushayrī—the authors of the earliest Sufi manuals. Furthermore, in al-Shahrastānī's epoch, there still were substantial theoretical differences between individual Ashʿarī teachers, who often only nominally belonged to the same school.¹⁵ Ashʿarism took a long time to attain the degree of maturity and uniformity that would make it acceptable and persuasive enough to be embraced by the majority of the *ʿulamāʾ*. Does this mean that throughout all these centuries the Muslim community had to "vegetate" without having some sort of "orthodoxy" that could guarantee its integrity? If, however, we deny this teaching the status of official "orthodoxy", we shall have to look for "orthodoxy" elsewhere.

At this point, one may be tempted to attribute "orthodoxy" to the so-called Muslim "traditionalists", normally identified with the *Ḥadīth folk*. At first sight, they may, indeed, seem to conform to our notion of the "orthodox" theologians. The "traditionalist" outlook espoused by the *Ḥadīth folk* was often perceived by Islamicists as a "conservative" religious attitude opposed to any "rationalistic innovations," introduced by the Muʿtazilis. This view, according to Marshall Hodgson, was largely based on an unfortunate misuse of the western word "traditionalism" that came to denote adherence to the corpus of *Ḥadīth* reports, i.e. the Muslim "tradition."¹⁶ Historically, however, the rise of the type of "traditionalism" peculiar to the *Ḥadīth folk* and emergence of the "rationalism" assigned to the Muʿtazilis date back to approximately

¹⁴ A persecution of the Ashʿaris by the Caliph al-Qādir, who tried to impose on his subjects his own interpretation of Sunnī "orthodoxy", is described in D. Sourdel, "Al-Qādir bi'llāh," *Encyclopédie de l'Islam* (New Edition), IV, 378-379.

¹⁵ See Alfred Guillaume, *The Summa Philosophiae of al-Shahrastānī* (London & Brisbane, Australia: Element Book, 1992), 307-327, *passim*.

¹⁶ Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, II, 175.

the same time. The two theological persuasions mirrored two possible responses to challenges posed by Islamic Revelation: an unquestioning fideistic acceptance, on the one hand, and inquisitive rationalist speculation, on the other. Seen within a broader historical context, the Mu'tazilis, who had inherited the methods of speculation, harking back to the Greek and the early Christian patterns, also had a good claim to be called "traditionalists". At the same time, *Ḥadīth* folk's assertion that they carried on a teaching inherited directly from the Prophet and his pious companions, would hardly stand up, when subjected to a critical examination, for objectively their approach appears as novel and unsanctioned by the earlier precedents as one of their rivals among rationalist thinkers.

Were "orthodoxy" to be associated with governmental enforcement, the Mu'tazilis would still have a strong case, because certain points of their creed were adopted as the official dogma of the Caliphate under al-Ma'mūn (196/812-218/833), who oppressed those who dared to deny the validity of Mu'tazilī doctrine of the "created Qur'ān". Mu'tazilism persisted as "orthodoxy" until the middle of the ninth century A.D., when the Caliph al-Mutawakkil took sides with the *Ḥadīth* folk, completely redressing the balance of power in their favor. Nevertheless, in the centuries that followed some representatives of the now "orthodox" *Ḥadīth* folk, in particular the Ḥanbalīs, often incurred the Caliph's censure and were, on occasion, subjected to an official persecution on doctrinal grounds. The same tactics were pursued by the Ayyūbid and Mamlūk rulers, who were often ill-disposed to the party of *Ḥadīth* transmitters on account of the latter's militancy and intolerance.¹⁷

Returning to the principal *ḥīraq* discerned by al-Shahrastānī, we can easily see that they were selected on the basis of what we may see as "inadequate" and "unequal" criteria. The former two, i.e. the *qadariyya* and *ṣifātīyya*, are rather loose theological trends shared by doctors of various religious and legal allegiances, including Sunnīs, the Shī'a, and some factions of the Khawārij. Al-Shahrastānī placed all those scholars under the same heading, because they held similar opinions on the problem of Divine Predestination and man's free will. At the same time they shared common outlook on the problem of the relationship between the Divine Essence and the Divine Attributes. The two other "sects", namely the *Khawārij* and the *Shī'a*, were singled out because of their specific political loyalties and social ideals. Their views regarding theological questions could well coincide with those sustained by the majority of Sunnīs, while their doctrines of the *imāmate* were uncompromisingly antagonistic. The members of the last three *ḥīraq*, mentioned by al-Shahrastānī, maintained common opinions on certain theological problems, although the scholars included in them could well be antagonists in regard to political, legal

¹⁷ H. Laoust, "Al-Barbahāri," *Et.*, I, 1039-1040; cf. Henri Laoust, "Le hanbalisme sous les mamlouks bahrides," *Revue des études islamiques* (Paris: 1960), tome 28, pp. 1-71, *passim*.

and ritual issues. Amidst these motley and loosely structured schools of thought one can hardly find one qualifying for the status of the "orthodox" creed.

The Sunnis, Shī'īs and Khawārij constituted rather political parties than bona fide theological schools. Accordingly, to judge their "orthodoxy" one ought to utilize other criteria than those applied to the religious beliefs *stricto sensu*. There are thus serious doubts as to whether such religiously charged term as "orthodoxy", when applied to these three *ṭīraq*, would still retain its pertinence. In any event, their "orthodoxy" or "heterodoxy" will entirely depend on the political and religious ideals espoused by the observer.

Resuming the quest for the religious "orthodoxy" *per se*, we may again turn to the teaching of *Ḥadīth* folk, who were often viewed as its staunch guardians. However, as I have already stressed, the soundness of their theological and metaphysical views were repeatedly questioned by Muslim theologians. Thus, both the Sunnī and the Shī'ī doxographers usually called them *jabriyya* (i.e. "the adepts of Divine Compulsion"), referring to the fact that the *Ḥadīth* folk held absurdly fatalistic views that accorded man no choice in his actions. Apart from this, those pious transmitters of *Ḥadīth* were often accused of an extreme "anthropomorphism" (*tajsim*).¹⁸ Their "misconceptions" were often attributed to the blind adherence to the "letter" of the Scripture that not infrequently entailed its "hyperliteral", and thus absurd, understanding. Because of their narrow "scripturalism", the *Ḥadīth* folk came to be known as *hashwīyya*, i.e. "those, who fill their speeches [with quotations from the Qur'ān and the Sunna],"¹⁹ dispensing thereby with necessity of an independent theological inquiry. At the same time, the *Ḥadīth* folk's anxiety to preserve the integrity of Sunnī community in the face of the Shī'ī political challenges earned them a good reputation among the Sunnī theologians, who often sought to assure their support. Thus, Abū 'l-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī (d.329/941), who could hardly accept most of the theologically "shallow" views maintained by the *hashwīyya*, praised them as "faithful adherents of the Sunna and the Straight Path" (*aḥl al-sunna wa 'l-istiḳāma*).²⁰ In order to demonstrate his loyalty to the political and social goals pursued by the pious *Ḥadīth* transmitters, al-Ash'arī composed a "profession of faith" that was a replica of one written by al-Barbahārī (d.329/941), the an unbending "literalist" and the leader of the Ḥanbali faction in Baghdad.²¹

¹⁸ See, e.g., Ibn Athīr, *Al-Kāmil fī 'l-tārīkh* (Cairo: Muniriyya Press, 1348/1929), VIII, 230; Henri Laoust, "Al-Barbahārī," *Et*, 1040; Prozorov, *Kniga*, 83-85, 100-101, 105-108; cf. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, I, 388.

¹⁹ Prozorov, *Kniga*, 202-204.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 203.

Depending on the concrete question they addressed, the *Hadith* folk were recognized now as "orthodox", now as "heterodox", or using the terms current in the Muslim polemical literature of that epoch, now as "correct" (*muṣīb*), now as "erring" (*ḍāll*). No doubt, the political views and social practice advocated by the "traditionalists" were accepted by many a Sunnī theologian as a means to consolidate the Muslim community. Yet, their "unenlightened" and "narrow" attitude to Revelation was not as popular with most Muslim intellectuals prone to resort to rational arguments in substantiation of the data provided by the Scripture.

On the whole, the situation just described suits well the vision of Islam that can be inferred from the picture of Muslim intellectual life provided by al-Shahrastānī: a perpetual collision of individual opinions over an invariant set of theological problems that eventually leads to a transient consensus that already contains the seeds of future disagreement. Disparate ideas and concepts, bits and pieces of creeds and doctrines circulated freely and were thus easily available to individual believers who patched them into a ragtag whole of *Weltanschauung*. What al-Shahrastānī, an insightful writer, grasped and tried to convey in his major work, appears, in retrospection, to have been an ephemeral episode in the perpetual creative dialogue aimed at reaching an unattainable agreement on the central problems of Muslim creed and religious practice:

Surely, in the later period of Muslim history, when several major theological trends and intellectual orientations in Islam converged in a more or less harmonious synthesis, such an agreement often seemed very close at hand. But this apparent harmony and calm was already fraught with the impendent reformist storms and iconoclastic thrusts of modernist ideology. Even in the midst of what is often perceived in the West as an utter decline of Muslim religious and political thought, it continued to work, producing subtle ripples. That dormant intellectual potential can be observed, for example, in the sophisticated and terse polemical works of the 17th and 18th centuries' Muslim writers often neglected by Western scholarship.²²

Another example of a specifically Muslim response to the dazzling diversity of Muslim religious life is found in the writings of Islam's greatest mysti-

²¹ I owe the reference to al-Barbahārī to Professor Michael Cook, who cited this Hanbali preacher as a vivid example of an extremely conservative interpretation of Islam practiced by the *Hadith* folk.

²² See, e.g., John Voll, "An Analysis of an Intellectual Group in Eighteenth Century Madina," in *Bulletin of the School of Asian and African Studies* (London, 1975), vol. 38, 32-39; John Voll, "Hadith Scholars and Tariqahs: An 'Ulamā' Group in the 18th century Haramayn and their Impact in the Islamic World," in *Journal of Asian and African Studies* (Leiden, Brill, 1980), vol. 15, nos 1-2, 264-273, N. Levtzion and J. Voll (eds.), *Eighteenth Century Renewal and Reform in Islam* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1987).

cal thinker Ibn 'Arabī (d.638/1240). This response should be discussed in the context of his cosmological and metaphysical doctrines. The Sufi thinker viewed the Universe as an incessant chain of divine manifestations (*tajalliyāt*; sing. *tajallī*), displaying innumerable Divine properties and perfections. Perceived by man, those manifestations, or theophanies, become the object of his knowledge and judgment. According to Ibn 'Arabī, human intellect, unaided by a mystical unveiling (*kashf*), fails to comprehend the realities of things and to attain the ultimate Truth.²³ In Ibn 'Arabī's opinion, intellect is also unable to create a sound concept of God, who always tends to present Himself in different, everchanging guises. This is due to its static and inflexible nature alluded to by the very Arabic verb from which it derives: 'aql—"to bind", "to tie", "to restrict". It follows that a scholar, entirely relying on his rational faculty, inevitably finds himself attached to some particular manifestation of God, while ignoring the rest of them. Furthermore, he then seeks to establish his vision of God as the only sound one, thus rejecting any alternative conceptions of Him as "unsound", or even "heretical". The perceptibility of each observer is rigidly determined by his primordial "preparedness" (*isti'dād*) that, in its turn, is an unchangeable quality inherent in his "immutable entity" (*'ayn thābita*) fixed in God's pre-eternal knowledge of the World. To illustrate his thesis, Ibn 'Arabī resorts to the highly controversial interpretation of the *Qur'anic* chapter 71 (*sūrat Nūḥ*). Nūḥ (Noah), having realized that God is one, invited his people, who used to venerate their idols, to embrace monotheism. Nūḥ's people, routinely portrayed by Muslim exegetes as stubborn and vicious adherents of paganism and idolatry, in Ibn 'Arabī's interpretation, prove more "perspicacious" than their Prophet. They refuse to worship only one, "transcendent", aspect of God (*tanzīh*), at the expense of the equally legitimate "immanent" side of the Divine (*tashbīh*). Ibn 'Arabī's argument rests on his doctrine of Divine manifestations, according to which God appears to the observer in both transcendent and immanent guises. In keeping with this doctrine, to discover the "true" nature of God and His relationship with the World, the observer must renounce his rational outlook and give himself to the veridical "direct vision" (*shuhūd*) and intuitive "direct tasting" (*dhawq*). This new, higher knowledge can only be achieved by the human heart (*qalb*), an Arabic word whose lexical connotations point to "motion", "fluctuation" and "transformation".²⁴ The heart "moves", "fluctuates" and "transforms" persistently following the outward "movements", "fluctuations", and "transformations" of the Divine Reality. By virtue of this persistent "following", the mystic finds himself in a state of perpetual "bewilderment" (*ḥayra*) that Ibn 'Arabī regards as the highest degree of spiritual attainment and divine gnosis available to the mystical striver.²⁵

²³ Chittick, *Mysticism versus Philosophy*, 89; Rosenthal, *Ibn 'Arabī* 8–11.

²⁴ These connotations, according to Ibn 'Arabī, are implicit in the Arabic root *q/l/b*, from which the word "heart" derives.

From the standpoint of Ibn 'Arabī's teaching, every theological school is inevitably doomed to engage in a constant and fruitless struggle against the concepts of God cherished by its opponents. In Ibn 'Arabī's view, this inescapable collision of opinions regarding God accounts for the incessant theological and philosophical disputations that never lead to an agreement or reconciliation. Both are definitely unobtainable, since each of the parties involved adheres to a frozen vision of God, built upon one of His contingent and transient manifestations, while being ignorant of all others. Ibn 'Arabī aptly defines the conflicting individual and collective concepts of Divinity as the "lords, created in religious beliefs".²⁵

Ibn 'Arabī argues that, in contrast to the static representation of God held by the rationalist theologians, the Sufi gnostics can contemplate Him in all His guises. God's multiple "veils" do not conceal from them the unique underlying Reality. Owing to their incessant heartbeat that follows the fluctuations of divine manifestations, the gnostics do not "bind" themselves to any of His contingent and volatile guises, and, therefore, attest to the validity of all conflicting visions of God. This inclusive perception is a distinguishing feature of the possessors of veridical vision (*aṣḥāb al-shuhūd, ahl al-ḥaqq*) as opposed to the adepts of rational reflection (*aṣḥāb al-nazar*), who are unable to relinquish their idiosyncratic perception of Reality.

Ibn 'Arabī, however, is not satisfied with one distinction. He repeatedly accentuates the gap separating another two groups of men of religion. The first includes those, who are inclined to accept the Revelation at face value, dismissing any attempt to interpret it, either symbolically or rationally, as a first step towards doubt and, in the long run, unbelief. In the opposing group the Sufi master includes those, who are not satisfied with what lies "on the surface" and seek to reach its "hidden", "inward" meaning. Ibn 'Arabī calls the former group *ʿulamā' al-rusūm*, i.e. the "textualists", or the "people of transmitted reports". The latter appear in his writings under various names: the "people of Truth" (*ahl al-ḥaqq*), the "people of inward meaning", (*ahl al-bāṭin*) etc. Although Ibn 'Arabī does criticize the *ʿulamā' al-rusūm* for their narrow-mindedness and bigotry, he, however, seems to imply that their existence is essential to the Muslim community insofar as they serve as guardians and exponents of the "literal" meaning of the Scripture and in the shari'a law. At the same time, he considers them blind both to the unfathomable spiritual dimensions and to the breathtaking intellectual challenges that can be discovered in Islamic Revelation. Because of their inherent blindness, the people of transmitted reports reject any interpreta-

²⁵ See Michael Sells, "Ibn 'Arabī's Garden Among the Flames. A Reevaluation," in *History of Religions* (Chicago: 1983-1984), 301-306.

²⁶ See Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam Al-ta'liq 'alayhi bi-qalam Abū 'l-A'la' Al-ʿIrāqī* (Beirut: 1400/1980) second edition, 225-226; cf. Sells, "Ibn 'Arabī's Garden," 299-301

tions that go beyond the Scripture's immediate practical implications for the everyday life of the Community. In Ibn 'Arabī's opinion, such an approach to the Qur'ān and the Sunna is extremely shallow and, in the long run, perverse and prone to error.

His view of religion did not pass unchallenged. It was criticized by a famous theologian and *Ḥadīth* expert al-Dhahabī (d.753/1352), who formulated a characteristic retort of *'ulamā' al-rusūm* to the esoteric outlook of Ibn 'Arabī and the like:

"By God, to an illiterate Muslim tending his cattle, who knows of the religious science nothing but few *suwar* (pl. of *sūra*) from the Qur'ān and believes in God and the Day of Judgment, his knowledge is more useful than the gnosis and all those subtle truths one acquires after having read a hundred books and having stayed in seclusion a hundred times..."²⁷

Predictably, the unquestioning and fideistic approach advocated by al-Dhahabī prompted him to adopt an "anthropomorphic" conception of God—a tendency known in Muslim heresiographical literature as *tajsim*.²⁸ Al-Dhahabī's vision of God seems to have been a logical consequence of his insistence on a literal interpretation of the image of Allah and His attributes as depicted in the Qur'ān and *Ḥadīth*. Hence, his vigorous rejection of any attempt to explain the Scripture in an allegorical manner, which he thought might lead the inquirer to relativize the divine Message. Al-Dhahabī's attitude towards the letter of the authoritative texts harks back to the tradition best represented by his older contemporary and companion, the Ḥanbalī theologian Ibn Taymiyya (d.728/1328). This scholar, who is often regarded in the West as a paragon of "orthodoxy", was repeatedly accused of excessive literalism. In a typical episode recounted by the famous Arab traveller Ibn Baṭūṭa (d.779/1377), Ibn Taymiyya is said to have endeavored to demonstrate the *Qur'ānic* report concerning God's descending from the Heavens by stepping down from the *minbar*. As a result, he was viewed by his less literally-minded contemporaries as a man "with a kink in his head".²⁹

That such collision of the two approaches to the Scripture was not an isolated episode but a recurring pattern in the history of Muslim religious polemic, can be inferred from a much earlier encounter that took place between the above-mentioned Ḥanbalī leader Abū Muḥammad al-Barbahārī and Abū 'l-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī, the founder of the supposedly "orthodox" Ash'arī school. Al-Ash'arī, by that time a renowned theologian, came to visit the

²⁷ Shams al-Dīn Al-Dhahabī, *Mizān al-ʿiḍāl fī naqd al-rijāl* (Cairo: 1325 A.H.) III, 109; cf. Knysh, "Ibn 'Arabī," 313.

²⁸ See, e.g., Moh. Ben Cheneb and J. de Somogyi, "Al-Dhahabī," *EL*, 214–216. For *tajsim* and *mujassima* see Prozorov, *Kniga*, 28, 33, 103, 106, 107, 186.

²⁹ See Donald Little, "Did Ibn Taymiyya Have A Screw Loose?" *Studia Islamica*, (Paris) vol. 41, 93–111.

Ḥanbalī in his home. It seems likely that he sought sanction for his activities in the field of theology and Muslim apologetics by soliciting al-Barbahārī's authoritative approval. According to al-Dhahabī, who describes this episode in his *Siyar al-ʿimām al-nubalāʾ*, al-Ashʿarī proudly stated: "I [composed] refutations of al-Jubbāʾī,³⁰ the Zoroastrians (*al-majūs*), and the Christians!" To this Abū Muḥammad replied: "I do not know what they teach. All I know is what was taught by the *imām* Aḥmad [Ibn Ḥanbal³¹]"³² Interestingly, in the eyes of al-Barbahārī, even al-Ashʿarī's pious polemics against rival theological schools and religious creeds was an unwelcome and suspicious enterprise, insofar as it exposed the critic to their, "pernicious" tenets and presupposed a certain degree of speculative skill on his part. Not unexpectedly, al-Barbahārī's "pious agnosticism" and literal-mindedness eventually resulted in his embracing of an "anthropomorphist" concept of God that was condemned in a special decree issued by the Caliph al-Rāḍī (d.323/ 935).³³

Al-Barbahārī's position is succinctly formulated by sympathetic al-Dhahabī, who quotes one of the Ḥanbalī's statements:

"When we talk about God we use only those words by which He Himself described Himself. We do not speculate on His attributes asking 'why?' and 'how?' The Qurʾān is God's speech; its sending down (*tanzīl*) and its light are not created, and any dispute about this is nothing but unbelief (*kufr*)!"³⁴

Ibn ʿArabī was certainly well aware of this literalist position advocated by many of his contemporaries who were anxious to extinguish what they thought was futile and subversive inquiry into the fundamentals of faith. As I have already noted, he responded by introducing another categorization of Muslim men of religion. In contrast to the first one that laid stress on the inherent contradiction between a "rationalist" and a "spiritual" approach to the Revelation, the second classification emphasized the antagonism between a frankly apologetic "textualism" and a more creative view of the Muslim Scripture encouraging rational reasoning. Moreover, the second classification apparently placed both the Sufi gnostics and their rationalist opponents in the same category, insofar as they both professed a similar allegorical approach to the revealed texts. It is against this background that Ibn ʿArabī's often cited remarks about

³⁰ For Abū Ḥāshim al-Jubbāʾī (d.321/933), a leader of the Muʿtazilī school, see L. Gardet, "Al-Djubbaʾī," *EF*, II, 570 and Daniel Gimaret, "Matériaux pour une bibliographie de Gubbāʾī," in *Journal Asiatique* (Paris: 1976), vol. 264, 227- 332..

³¹ For Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d.241/855), the founder of the Ḥanbalī movement, see Henri Laoust, "Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal," *EF*, I, 272-277.

³² Shams al-Dīn Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar al-ʿimām al-nubalāʾ*, edited and annotated by Shuʿayb al-Arnāʾuṭ and Ibrāhīm al-Zubayq (Beirut: Muʿassasat al-Risāla, 1403/1983), XV, 91.

³³ For the text of the decree see Ibn ʿAthīr, *Al-Kāmil*, VIII, 230.

³⁴ Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, XV, 91.

the soundness of arguments advanced by the philosophers and speculative theologians, despite their "unbelief,"³⁵ are to be understood.

The second classification of scholars proposed by Ibn 'Arabī is likely to remind us of the opposition between the ahl al-zāhir ("people of outward meaning") and ahl al-bāṭin ("people of the inward, hidden meaning"). In Islamic studies, this polarity is often associated exclusively with the Sunnī-Isma'īlī confrontation, and, more rarely, with the conflict between the *fuqahā'* and the esoterically-minded Sufis. In the light of the foregoing, one would, however, infer that the opposition between the two groups is so pervasive that it can be applied to Islamic religious thought as a whole. This is probably what Ibn 'Arabī had in mind when he spoke of the two contradicting positions upheld by the representatives of the two major religious and intellectual persuasions within the pale of Islam.

Within a more nuanced frame of reference, after this principle division had been made, a further demarcation became possible. At this stage, Ibn 'Arabī began to juxtapose a spiritual (mystical) vision of Reality with a rationalizing interpretation of Islam. As a mystical thinker, he treated the latter as inexact and susceptible to error. Yet, as the subsequent development of Muslim theological thought has shown, the gap between the two conflicting approaches proved not entirely unbridgeable. In fact, it was effectively bridged already by Ibn 'Arabī's direct disciple, Ṣadr al-dīn al-Qunawī (d.673/1274) who was followed by a host of thinkers combining esotericism and philosophy.³⁶ Generally speaking, in the classifications that Ibn 'Arabī has outlined, both sides of the dichotomies appear equally essential and complementary, and again, as with al-Shahrastānī, the endemic Muslim view of the religious situation evinces no clear-cut, Christian-style "orthodoxy" versus "heresy" scheme.

The evidence and arguments furnished above, albeit by no means complete, have clearly demonstrated that Eurocentric interpretive categories, when uncritically superimposed on Islamic realities, may produce serious distortions. Thus such distinctly Christian concepts as "orthodoxy" and "heresy" foster a tendency to disregard the intrinsic pluralism and complexity characteristic of the religious life of the Muslim community, leaving aside significant and sometimes critical "nuances". In order to escape these shortcomings, one should try to let Islamic tradition speak on its own terms, to let it communicate its own concerns, its own ways of articulation and interpretation of religious

³⁵ Ibn 'Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt*, I, 145. cf. Rosenthal, "Ibn 'Arabī," 12.

³⁶ See James Morris, "Ibn 'Arabī and His Interpreters," in *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Pt. I: "Recent French Translations," vol. 106, no. 3 (1986), 539-564; Pt. II, "Influences and Interpretations," vol. 106, no. 4, (1986), 733-756. Pt. III, "Influences and Interpretations (Conclusion)," vol. 107, no. 1 (1987), 101-120; William Chittick, *Mysticism versus Philosophy*; Alexander Knysh, "Irfan Revisited: Khomeini and the Legacy of Islamic Mystical Philosophy" in *The Middle East Journal* (Washington, D.C.: 1992), vol. 46, no. 4, 631-653.

phenomena. Al-Shahrastānī and Ibn 'Arabī were chosen as the tradition's spokesmen because they, each in his own manner, endeavored to explain and classify the wide variety of theological trends and religious loyalties characteristic of medieval Islam. The explanations and classifications they furnished substantially differ, reflecting personal spiritual and intellectual orientations and theological outlook. They are, nevertheless, very helpful, inasmuch as they provide subtle and dynamic visions of Muslim religion, devoid of a rigid confrontation between the supposedly immutable and comprehensive "orthodox" dogma and certain "heretical sects" trying to subvert it.

According to al-Shahrastānī, different scholars held different opinions, and therefore some of them inevitably diverged from what he himself held to be an "authentic" creed. But even if they erred, it was in good faith, and they remained within the confines of Islamic religion.³⁷ Al-Shahrastānī arranged the Muslim *ṣīraq* in keeping with their positions on the four major clusters of theological problems. At the same time, he seems to have implied that such classification was not absolute, since a group of scholars may hit on the "right" solution with regard to one particular problem, simultaneously "missing" with regard to the other. In any event his portrayal of Muslim theological disputes lacked a clearly defined criteria of "orthodoxy" and "heresy". In other words, long before the modern deconstructionist critique came into fashion, al-Shahrastānī discarded the dichotomous view of the religious situation in the Muslim community as inconsistent with the nature of the phenomena he investigated.

Ibn 'Arabī, whose outlook was firmly anchored in the esoteric vision of reality, tended to separate the Sufi "gnostics" (*ʿarīfūn*) from the "rationalists", and then to distinguish both parties from the religious "textualists" and literal-minded *ʿulamāʾ*. His two classifications worked finely, when applied to both Muslim theological disputes and Muslim intellectual and cultural life as a whole. The first classification provided by the Sufi master effectively cut across both the sectarian boundaries (e.g., Sunnism and Shīʿism) and individual loyalties to various schools of Muslim law, throwing into relief the two major religious and intellectual patterns that have persisted in Muslim societies until our day.

Ibn 'Arabī's second classification was very helpful in explaining the perpetual opposition of a coherent and influential group of Muslim *ʿulamāʾ* to any attempt at something other than a "literalist" interpretation of Islam throughout the history of Muslim civilization. United in their effort to ward off all kinds of allegorical understanding of the Revelation and opposed to high theological speculation, this group of scholars constituted what may be defined as

³⁷ Prozorov, *Kniga*, 178.

"zero orthodoxy"³⁸ with an outlook rooted in the famous "Augustinian" principle, which, in the Islamic milieu, was exemplified in the formula *bi-lā kayf*, i.e. "without asking 'how?'" From the viewpoint of "zero orthodoxy", any pondering on the data of the Revelation, any deviation from its narrow pragmatic and literal interpretation, from the established religious practice, were to be rejected as deplorable "innovations" (*bida'*; *sing. bid'a*).³⁹ This kind of religious conformism proved congenial to the majority of Muslim scholars anxious to protect the integrity and morals of communal life. It thrived in both the Sunnī and the Shī'ī communities, spawning a non-stop stream of accusations and—when supported by those in power—persecutions, against the "innovators". Ironically, the rigid "literalist" approach, advocated by the religious conservatives, often resulted in the grossly anthropomorphic conceptions of God and, occasionally, outright fatalism. The latter's logic, paradoxically, invalidated the literalists' substantial efforts to develop a comprehensive religious ritual and a uniform practice—a fact that their opponents were quick to point out. In an attempt to disprove their critics, the people of transmitted reports gradually became embroiled in the fierce theological debates imposed on them by their opponents. Eventually, they had to adopt the methods of the latter's rational inquiry and defensive theological argumentation.

Apart from "zero orthodoxy", one may perhaps speak of what may be tentatively dubbed "orthodoxy-in-the-making"—a more or less generally accepted religious outlook that immediately comes to the forestage, when some vital aspect of religious establishment is perceived as being endangered. This rather amorphous type of "orthodoxy" took a long time to gain a firm hold and was a product of collective efforts exerted by many generations of Muslim religious thinkers. This somewhat spontaneous type of "orthodoxy" appears to have always been on the defense against numerous inquisitive "schismatics", who forced it to develop elaborate defensive strategies and a host of counterarguments. The dialectics of inquiry/defense has been instrumental in the final shaping of a viable and flexible theological and practical doctrine that is best for the position of Muslim "orthodoxy". One, however, should not project this later model of "authentic" Islam, which took centuries to acquire its final form, into the earlier stages of Muslim history. At that time, the religious

³⁸ This term was coined by Dr. Tawfiq Ibrāhīm, an Arab scholar, currently living in Russia. Unfortunately, he has never elaborated on it in his published works, and what follows is my personal understanding of its meaning.

³⁹ Theological studies were often replaced by the elaborations on religious practice and ritual. The latter in fact were the primary focus of inquiry conducted by representatives of "zero orthodoxy" who have produced many volumes of polemical literature devoted to various practical precepts. A great number of treatises were written, for instance, in refutation or defence of the necessity to raise hands during the prayer. The authors meticulously described the "right" ways to perform ritual ablution, to fast, to behave oneself in mosques, public places etc. For a vivid example see Henri Laoust, *La profession de foi d'Ibn Baṭṭa* (Damascus. 1958), *passim*.

situation seems to have been, much more variegated and polyphonic primarily due to the absence of a developed "mainstream tradition"—a fact that makes difficult any judgments as to the "orthodoxy" or "heterodoxy" of some concrete religious belief.

Unfortunately, a routine procedure on the part of contemporary western researchers, both students of Islam and social anthropologists exploring the Muslim societies, consists in the *ad hoc* adoption of a judgmental frame of reference dominated by a timeless and ahistorical notion of "orthodoxy". Once adopted, artificial notion becomes the touchstone in determining the "loyalty" and "authenticity" of other beliefs and teachings. For example, were we to adopt the standpoint held by the champions of "zero orthodoxy", we would have to treat any slightest departure from the "pure and simple" faith of the Prophet and his companions as either an "innovation", or a downright "heresy". In this perspective, such intellectual and spiritual trends within Islam as Mu'tazilism, *falsafa*, speculative tendencies within Sufism, and, perhaps, even Ash'arism itself, especially at the initial stages of its development, should be condemned as "heterodoxy".

If, on the other hand, we grant Ash'arism the status of Muslim "orthodoxy," we shall soon meet with considerable difficulties proving our case. Firstly, it was a school of theological speculation drawing its inspiration from the "non/pre-Islamic" sources—a fact that would make it unacceptable to many Muslim purists. Secondly, it lacked the comprehensiveness, namely the practical precepts and recommendations that would have guided the believer in everyday devotional life and led him to salvation. Thus as a result of our quest for "orthodoxy", we are likely to be left with a rather fluid body of more or less "generally accepted" beliefs, theological ideas and practical guiding principles, in other words, the "spontaneous orthodoxy". Historically, this "orthodoxy" was being formed over a long period of time on the basis of a consensus, achieved by the leading *ʿulamā'* of the Sunnī and Shīʿī communities. It was in the process of perpetual modification, renewal, and readjustment in response to the faultfinding efforts of quizzical "schismatics", who apparently never were in short supply. A description of such spontaneous "orthodoxy", its functioning and effectiveness, is not my present purpose. A cursory glance at the stages of its development would suggest that this type of "orthodoxy" must have been rather fickle and elusive. Since it was formed on the opinions of a limited circle of influential *ʿulamā'*, who were, quite naturally, mortal, one wonders what happened to their version of "orthodoxy" when they were gone, and in how its continuity was achieved.

As Islamic history finely shows, the most effective way to establish an "orthodox" creed was to assure it state support. These tactics were practiced by many groups of Muslim theologians, who, having succeeded in rallying rulers to their cause, often sought to suppress their rivals. It is, however, evident

that most rulers preferred to maneuver among the rival theological factions and interest groups linked to them, thus keeping the situation under their control.⁴⁰ They were, for the most part, quick, if necessary, to change their doctrinal allegiances, following the notorious principle "divide and rule". The history of the Ḥanafī-Ashʿarī and Ḥanbalī-Ashʿarī rivalry in medieval Nishāpūr and Baghdad are just two episodes illustrating this thesis. The fact that rulers, for obvious reasons, tended to avoid religious extremes must have substantially contributed to the eventual emergence of a more or less "standardized" and "moderate" Muslim dogma in both the Sunnī and the Shīʿī communities during the later period of Muslim history. At the same time, the rulers usually supported those teachings that were likely to win the broadest popular support. Briefly put, rulers, as well as men of religion, played a critical role in creating the eventual doctrinal synthesis that, from the 14th and 15th centuries on, encompassed most of the attested ritual, spiritual and intellectual tenets within Islam.

In the 16th century, when the great Muslim empires came into being, they found the well-developed creeds, which they readily adopted as state dogmas. From that time on, the rulers of the empires, and those who imitated their ways on a local scale, were more than ever prone to gaining close control of religious life and institutions, promoting some uniform "orthodoxy" and suppressing religious dissent fraught with popular upheavals. Nevertheless, the concrete shape of state "orthodoxy" was strongly dependant on the ruler's personal whim as well as the views popular with his entourage. This is vividly illustrated by the religious experimentations, undertaken during the reign of the Mughal emperor Akbar (1564-1605). His reign also shows that, in the later period of Islamic history, the ruler had at his disposal a broad array of religious options that he could impose on his subjects depending on the circumstances and personal predilections.

My disparate observations, combined with those of medieval Muslim thinkers, may help to alert us, once again, to some dangers inherent in the Eurocentric categories of "orthodoxy" and "heresy", when transplanted to Islamic soil. One may, of course, choose to relinquish them altogether, although this solution is likely to seriously complicate the Western discourse on Muslim societies. Alternatively, one may suggest that the binary opposition "orthodoxy"/"heresy" should not be used indiscriminately with regard to Islamic history as a whole. In each period and in each region of the Islamic world, one is likely to find a particular blend of "orthodox" ideas. This blend, however, often prove rather unstable and subject to a drastic change as a result of

⁴⁰ See, e.g., a description of the religious policy pursued by the rulers of the Rasūlid dynasty in medieval Yemen in my article "Ibn ʿArabī in the Yemen: His Admirers and Detractors," in *Journal of the Muhiyiddin Ibn ʿArabī Society* (Oxford: 1992), vol. 11, fasc. 2 38-63.

redressing the political and social balance of powers. In any case, the above discussion calls for a greater sensitivity on the part of the scholars making use of the handy, yet ambivalent, notions of "orthodoxy" and "heresy".

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A KUBRAWĪ TREATISE ON MYSTICAL VISIONS: THE *RISĀLA-YI NŪRIYYA* OF 'ALĀ' AD-DAWLA AS-SIMNĀNĪ

The practice of *dhikr* is a central component of Sufi life and instruction. The word is normally translated as "recollection" or "remembrance," referring to the systematic repetition of God's name or of one of His attributes. At heart, this constitutes a meditational exercise, the goal of which is to rid the mystic of preoccupation with the self and other worldly concerns, thereby devoting him or herself completely to the contemplation of God. Various Sufi orders have prescribed the content and method of *dhikr* for their adherents, and the differences between them are so distinct as to constitute one of the primary distinguishing characteristics of these orders.¹

Although the content of these *dhikr* exercises is accessible in guidebooks and compendia written by Sufi shaykhs as well as in a number of secondary works, very little information is available describing the experiences a mystic undergoes while practicing *dhikr*. The *Risāla-yi nūriyya* of 'Alā' Ad-Dawla As-Simnānī (d. 736/1336) constitutes one of the few treatises providing such information.

Simnānī was a prominent figure in the Kubrawī Sufi order. In its formative period, the Kubrawiyya appears to have been a loose conglomeration of individuals who derived their mystical affiliation from a visionary Sufi named Najm Ad-Dīn al-Kubrā (d. 618/1221). Their influence on Sufi thought and practice has been far reaching, and many subsequent orders in Iran, Central Asia, and India derive their mystical affiliation directly from these Kubrawī masters.²

¹ A survey treatment of the *dhikr* practices of a number of orders is found in Muḥammad ibn 'Alī as-Sanūsī, *As-salsabil al-mu'in li'l-tarāiq al-arba'in*, printed in the margins of the same author's *Al-masā'il al-ashar* (Cairo: 1935).

² There is very little by way of doctrine, ritual or belief that identifies these early figures as belonging to one order. Despite the fact that Kubrā was himself a Sunni, two prominent Kubrawī shaykhs, Sa'd Ad-Dīn Ḥamūya (d. 650/1252) and his son Sadr Ad-Dīn (d. 722/1322), were Shī'īs. Kubrawī mystics are found on both sides of the debate over the doctrine of "Oneness of Being" (*waḥdat al-wujūd*), one of the main issues dividing Sufis in their day. Furthermore, they appear to have had no shared stance regarding involvement in politics: Najm Ad-Dīn al-Kubrā allegedly met his death fighting the Mongols; Simnānī's teacher, Nūr Ad-Dīn al-Isfarā'īnī (d. 717/1317) maintained contact with the Ilkhanid court, while Simnānī himself was deeply involved in the intrigues of various princes and was respected by the Ilkhanid rulers, Wljāytū Khudābanda (r. 703/1304-716/1316) and Abū Sa'īd (r. 716/1316-736/1335). For a survey of Kubrawī history, see the introduction to Najm Ad-Dīn Dāya ar-Rāzī, *The Path of God's Bondsmen from Origin to Return*, tr. Hamid Algar (Delmar: Caravan, 1982); also Marijan Molé, "Les Kubrawiyya entre sunnisme et shiisme aux huitième et neuvième siècles de l'Hégire," *Revue des Études Islamiques* 29 (1961), 61-142.

One of the distinguishing features of the Kubrawī order in its formative period is the emphasis placed upon visionary experiences. Colors and visions encountered in meditation are seen not only as markers signifying progress along the mystical path, but also as symptoms of psychic and spiritual troubles ailing the individual. As such, treatises on visionary experience function as a *materia medica* of spiritual ailments in addition to their primary use as manuals of mystical instruction. Descriptions of mystical visions are found in several Kubrawī works such as the *Fawā'id al-jamāl wa-fawā'id al-jalāl* of Najm Ad-Dīn al-Kubrā³ and the *Mirṣād al-ibād min al-mabūd ila'l-ma'ād* of Najm Ad-Dīn Dāya ar-Rāzī (d. 654/1256).

One treatise, the *Risāla-yi nūriyya*, stands out for its explicit and systematized discussion of mystical lights and visions. Although color symbolism and its association with mystical advancement forms the basis of much of Simnānī's thought, the *Risāla-yi nūriyya* is the only work in which he provides a systematic description of these lights as they are encountered during the practice of *dhikr*.⁴

This work has sometimes been falsely attributed to Shihāb Ad-Dīn As-Suhrawardī (d. 587/1191) and 'Alī-yi Hamadānī (d. 786/1385). Based on internal evidence, however, there can be no doubt that the treatise belongs to Simnānī: it is explicitly stated that the work was written at the request of a student named Muḥammad-i Khurd (possibly Khirād), who is known to have been one of Simnānī's closest disciples.⁵ The doctrines expressed in the treatise are identical to those found in Simnānī's other writings, and the style is also characteristically his.

The treatise begins by providing a general description of the forms of light found in the visible and invisible dimension. Simnānī then proceeds to the main subject of his treatise, which is a detailed outline of the lights encountered as one engages in mystical recollection (*dhikr*) in order to perfect one's spiritual nature. These lights are hierarchical, corresponding to the subtle substances (*latā'if*) or organs which make up the mystical body. In order to make his discussion more comprehensive, Simnānī additionally describes the light of Satan, and those of ablu-tion and recollection.

³ Fritz Meier, *Die Fawā'id al-Jamāl wa Fawā'id al-Jalāl des Nagm ad-Dīn al-Kubrā*, Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur, no. 9 (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1957).

⁴ For a detailed discussion of Simnānī's life and thought, see Jamal J. Elias, *Sūfī Thought and Practice in the Teachings of 'Alā' ad-dawla as-Simnānī* (PhD Dissertation: Yale University, 1991).

⁵ Iqbāl-i Sistānī, *Chihil majlis-i 'Alā' ad-dawla-i Simnānī*, ed. 'Abd ar-Raff Ḥaqīqat (Tehran: Shirkat-i mu'allifān-u mutarjimān-i Mrān, 1979); Ibn al-Karbālā'ī, *Rawdhat al-jinān wa janāt al-jannāt*, ed. Jāfar Sulṭān al-Qurrā'ī (Tehran: Bungāh-i tarjuma wa nashr-i kitāb, 1965); Zayn al-'Abidin-i Shirwānī, *Riyādh as-siyāḥa*, ed. Aṣghar Ḥamid Rabbānī (Tehran: Kitābforūshī-yi sa'dī, 1960), 525; Ma'sūm 'Alī Shāh, *Tarā'iq al-ḥaqā'iq*, ed. M. Jāfar Maḥjūb (Tehran: Kitābkhāna-yi bārānī, 1921), 2:339; S.M. Sadr, *Sharḥ-i aḥwāl-u al-kār-u āsār-i Shaykh 'Alā' ad-dawla as-Simnānī* (Tehran: Dānish, 1955), 45.

In addition to its systematic treatment of lights and colors, the *Risāla-yi nūriyya* also contains graphic descriptions of the specific visions encountered along the mystical path. These include sparks, smoke, experiences of levitation, and visions of buildings and animals. Simnānī's descriptions are often vivid, relying on everyday objects as metaphoric points of reference.

Four manuscripts of this work are known to exist, representing two stemmae. The oldest is dated 851/1447 and is contained in a collection of treatises attributed to 'Alī-yi Hamadānī, a prominent Kubrawī mystic who was affiliated with Simnānī through two of the latter's disciples: Sharaf Ad-Dīn-i Mazdaqānī (d. 766/1364-65) and 'Alī-yi Dūsī (or Dūstī, d. 734/1334).⁶ The manuscript is clearly written, but is incomplete and contains many lacunae which are noted by the scribe.

The two other manuscripts belonging to the first stemma are both inaccurate. One is dated dhu'l-Ḥijja 1048/April 1639 but is incomplete.⁷ The second, though complete, cannot be accurately dated.⁸

By far the most valuable copy of the treatise is preserved in the Süleymaniye Library under the title *Risālat al-anwār*.⁹ Dated Sha'bān 899/May 1494, this manuscript is complete, and is accurately and clearly written. It is the sole representative of the second manuscript stemma.



[44r]¹⁰ In the name of God, the Compassionate and Merciful.

Gratitude and thanks to the Creator Who, through love and perfect knowledge, changed the light of intention (*nūr-i irādāt*) into the seed of the tree of bliss (*shajara-yi sa'ādāt*) in the soil within the human being which is the invisible realm of the souls. With the power of omnipotence, He planted this seed therein and brought forth the tree of bliss, and bore it to the heaven of His intimacy. And with the wisdom of sovereignty, He brought forth the fruit of the light of sainthood (*nūr-i wilāyat*) from that tree, and raised it above all His beings and placed it at their head. And may there be countless blessings

⁶ MS. 4009, Kitābkhāna-yi Ganjbakhsh, Islamabad, pages 751-762 [abbreviated *Ganj*]. For more on 'Alī-i Hamadānī, see J.K. Teufel, *Eine Lebensbeschreibung des Scheichs 'Alī-i Hamadānī* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1962); G. Bowering, *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. " 'Alī Hamadānī."

⁷ Private collection of Arif Naushahi [abbreviated *Naw*]. This manuscript was copied by Muhammad Ghanī, a disciple of Akhund Darwīza-yi Nangarhārī (d. 1048/1638).

⁸ MS. 4274, Kitābkhāna-yi dānishgāh, (Tehran) [abbreviated *Dān*]. Najib Māyil-i Hirawī has prepared an edition on the basis of this manuscript and MS. 4409, Kitābkhāna-yi Ganjbakhsh (*Muṣannifāt-i fīrṣt*) (Tehran: Shirkat-i intishārāt-i 'ilmī wa farhangī, 1990), 301-11.

⁹ MS. 1105, Carullah Efendi, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Istanbul, folios 44r-48v [abbreviated *Car*].

¹⁰ Folio numbers in brackets refer to MS. 1105, Carullah Efendi.

and peace upon the purified spirit of the Prophet—it is only in the garden of His laws (*sharīʿat*) that this tree can reach fruition. And may [blessings] also be upon his family and companions who are the landlords of the “Master of Inner Perception” (*sāhib-i basīrat*, i.e. Muḥammad), and upon the saints and scholars (*awliyā wa ʿulamāʾ*) and the followers of his tradition who are the chaste gardeners of prophetic custom.

2. Know that it has been some time since the “champion of reality,” Muḥammad-i Khurd, who is one of my disciples, has desired that a treatise about the nature of illumination and the description of various lights be written for the guidance of the novice traveller and the satisfaction of the accomplished mystic. But I wished that these secrets should remain hidden from strange eyes, so I did not take his entreaties into consideration until this moment. Now the pen has set out to describe the Eternal One, and all volition has passed to my fingers, so that the figures which were drawn on the page of my heart are now reproduced on this page in summary form. God willing, may they be a source of pleasure for those who read them and proof for those who hear them, and may they remain far from the impure and hidden from outsiders.

3. Know, O friend, that God has illuminated your heart with “sacred lights” (*anwār qudsiyya*), which is what the light of a thing is called in actuality so that it may know itself and see all things and know them. It can see and know all things with it. This absolute light (*nūr-i muṭlaq*) is a particular attribute of God.

4. Know that the light of intention (*nūr-i irādat*) is earthly and the light of sainthood (*nūr-i wilāyat*) is celestial, as He says in His Glorious Book: “Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth” (24:35). And the light of sainthood, which is His special attribute, cannot be seen except with the light of intention which is an attribute of His essence; it is for this reason that He says: “My saints are beneath My tents—no one knows them but Me.”¹¹ Once you know the meaning of this, know that, in the invisible dimension of the spiritual realm (*ghayb-i anfus*), light is associated with the inner mystery (*khāfi*), spirit (*rūḥ*), inmost being (*sirr*), heart (*dil*), intellect (*ʿaql*), and soul (*nafs*),¹² and in the visible dimension of the spiritual realm (*shahādat-i anfus*) with the light of the eyes and the conceptual faculties which are stored in the brain. In the invisible dimension of the physical realm (*ghayb-i āfāq*) they are attributed to spirits of the angels and *jinn*, and in the visible of the physical realm (*shahādat-i āfāq*) with the sun, moon,¹³ stars, candles, and lamps.

¹¹ This is a non-canonical prophetic tradition.

¹² The manuscripts have conflicting lists. The mystery (*khāfi*) does not appear in *Car*; *Ganj* does not contain intellect (*ʿaql*). The intellect does not ordinarily appear as a substance in Simnānī's scheme of the spiritual realm.

¹³ Not in *Car*.

5. This is to say that when the mystic turns his face from the visible and invisible dimensions of the physical realm, he should also turn away from the visible of the spiritual realm and face the invisible of the spiritual realm. The first curtain that appears before him is turbid.¹⁴ As soon as he strikes the stone of his heart with the flint of the profession of faith, "There is no deity but God," the hidden fire which is placed in him becomes apparent, and he stands in the fireship of the soul (*ḥarrāqa-yi nafs*); he feeds it with the firewood of the body until it becomes ignited and that turbid curtain is transformed to dark blue. And as the fire becomes stronger and the firewood of existence is dried of the moisture of [remaining] morsels of sensual delight (*nadawāt-i luqmāt-i ḥuḥuẓi*), the colors become purer and the smoke is decreased. When the morsels (*luqmāt*) are entirely made up of what is just, then no smoke remains and a pleasant odor reaches the nose. Colorful lights also appear, and one witnesses [true] spiritualists.¹⁵ All that has been described results from the blessing of the strength of recollection and from guarding the morsel from the moisture of sensual delight.

6. The difference between the colors red, white, blue, yellow, black and green in this stage is the result of the strength of the fire of recollection. It may so happen that the essence of the fire of recollection may come out from behind the curtain and shout: "It is no other!" and say: "I am everything."¹⁶ It is necessary that the individual not be arrogant at this stage since this is the stage of the beginner in recollection.

7. The next fire which appears to the mystic on the path is undefined, but insofar as it can be described it is the fire of reality, and of recollection, and of love, and of longing, and of desire, and of anger, and of evil, and of the physical body of which the human being is composed. It is possible to differentiate between all these fires with signs that occur along the path, but the beginner should not [45r] attempt to differentiate between them without the guidance of a master lest Satan whisper suggestions to his soul in order to influence it, causing the novice to fall into the trap of arrogance and turn away from the path. It is, therefore, necessary that the disciple tell everything he

¹⁴ *Naw* and *Dān* add: "and is the curtain of the unseen of Satan."

¹⁵ *Dān*: "spiritual witnessing comes to pass;" *Car*: "one witnesses spirituality." This is probably a reference to the appearance of the mystical guide in the unseen realm (*shaykh al-ghayb*), a phenomenon frequently mentioned in Sufi texts.

¹⁶ *Sinnānī* is paraphrasing a distinctive passage from the *Fawā'id al-jamāl wa sawā'id al-jalāl* of Najm Ad-Dīn al-Kubrā (d. 618/1221): "*dhikr* is a fire which neither abides nor spreads. When it enters an abode it says 'It is I and no other!' and that is a meaning of *lā ilāha illā 'llāh*. And if there is wood in the abode it burns it [the wood] and it becomes fire; if there is darkness in the abode [the *dhikr*] becomes a light and destroys it [the darkness] and illuminates the abode; and if there is light in the abode it does not oppose it but this light is also recollection (*dhikr*) and the one who recollects (*dhikr*) and the object of the recollection (*madhkur*) which habit together, light upon light." (Meier, 4-5). This passage has been borrowed by other writers, most notably by Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh al-Iskandarī (d. 708/1309) in his *Miftāḥ al-falāḥ wa-misbāḥ al-arwāḥ* (Cairo: Maṭba'a Muhammad 'Aṭā' Ṣabīḥ, n.d., 6).

sees to the master so that he [the master] may explain the mystical experiences and visions.

8. After this, when the existence soiled by the morsels of sensual delight and tarnished by the filth of disobedience is completely burned, and annihilation (*fanā*) has been obtained as a result of the fire of recollection, then the light of the soul becomes apparent, the curtain of which is of a pleasing, dark blue color.

9. After this the light of the heart appears, the curtain of which is ruby red in color. Upon seeing this light the mystic experiences a great mystical taste (*dhawq*) which reaches his heart and causes him to obtain permanence (*istiqāmat*) on the path.

10. After this, the light of the inmost being (*sirr*) shines forth, the curtain of which is white. In this stage the mystic acquires knowledge of the delight of unveiling.¹⁷

11. After this the light of the spirit shines forth, the color of which is an extremely pleasing yellow. The soul is weakened and the heart is strengthened by seeing it.

12. After this the light of the inner mystery (*khaṭī*)— to which the Holy Spirit is a reference—is manifested. Its curtain is black, a pure and awesome blackness. Sometimes, through fear at seeing this black curtain, the mystic is annihilated and his body begins to tremble.

13. This is to say that the water of eternal life is arrayed in this darkness. Whoever makes a place for himself in the luminescence of the light of the Prophet (may peace be upon him) and remains in the shadow of obedience to him, like Khidr¹⁸ that person reaches the spring of the water of life which is the source of the lights of the attributes. He drinks a cupful of love from the heavenly river (*kawthar*) of grace and becomes deserving of that which the Lord, Most High, manifests to him through His attributes of beauty and majesty. At this stage, it is necessary that one not incline oneself towards the jewels (*jawāhir*) that are placed in this darkness, so that, like Alexander, he is not deprived of the spring of the water of life. He should travel in this darkness with sincere steps and keep his heart strong. Under no circumstances should he fear any of the dreadful forms and sounds [that he encounters]. The light of the inner mystery then becomes apparent from its potentiality in the invisible, and fear is transformed into intimacy.

14. When he has fulfilled the requirements of this stage, "absolute light" (*nūr-i mutlaq*) is manifested. This is a particular attribute of God, [45v] ex-

¹⁷ An alternate reading would be: "the inspirational knowledge of unveiling."

¹⁸ Khidr is an alias for the prophet Elias or Elijah who discovered the fountain of eternal life and thus attained immortality. He is also sometimes equated with Alexander's prime minister and with St. George. Khidr figures prominently in Islamic mysticism as the miraculous shaykh of the unseen who guides the most capable and fortunate mystics in their quest.

alted above indwelling in (*ḥuṭū*) and union with (*ittiḥād*) any other, sanctified beyond association and disassociation. Its curtain is green in color, this greenness being a sign of the life of the tree of existence. The manifestation of the "absolute light" is not possible except in paradise. The effects that appear in it, that is in this manifestation, are: firstly, the annihilation¹⁹ of the mystic, then standing on the boundary, splitting of the sky, transformation of the earth, the flying of mountains, the dispersal of fixed stars, the changed rising of the sun and moon, the dimming of planets, the assemblage in open spaces, judgement of accounts on the balance, traversing the path, being thrown into the abyss, and being lifted up in levels.²⁰ When the mystic sees these signs, he should know himself to be in the eternal garden. Then he should pay complete attention to the beauty of His presence in accordance with the command "Neither did sight falter nor exceed the bounds" (53:17). He should not incline to anything so that the "holy essence" (*dhāt-i muqaddas*) may be manifested. Witnessing this instantaneously and miraculously returns light to his ailing eyes.

15. The manifestation of the light of the "real" (*nūr-i ḥaqiq*) is exalted above all causes; nothing resembles it and it resembles nothing. The light of the inner mystery is manifested above the head and no light resembles it in the visible realm; it annihilates the mystic in the beginning of its manifestation. The light of the spirit is greater and more awesome than that of the sun, and is generally manifested behind the back, though sometimes also from the left and right. The light of the inmost being resembles that of Venus but is brighter and subtler than it; its manifestation occurs opposite the mystic and strikes his eyes, enters his body and annihilates him. When the mystic returns from that state, he sees much knowledge collected within him which he had never known or heard before. When this light falls on his eyes it permeates all parts of his body. He then sees himself like illuminated water, since his skin and the clothes that are on his body are illuminated. The light of the heart resembles the moon at first, although the true point (*nūqṭa-yi ḥaqīqī*) that is in that moon as well as in the mystic's heart also appears. This light manifests itself on the left side of the mystic and annihilates him. Effort in the heart is decreased in this stage,²¹ and strange and wondrous lights and states occur to the mystic. The light of the [46r] soul surrounds the mystic. It resembles a polished door on which the sun is shining and from which the reflection is falling on a wall.

16. The manifestation of the light of the soul does not possess the power to annihilate. As for other lights that he sees, such as a candle, lamp or lantern: these are the lights of the spirits of humans and *jinn*,²² classed according to their

¹⁹ *Ganj*, *Naw*, and *Dān*: resurrection (*qiyāmat*).

²⁰ These are standard Islamic eschatological images. They are described in vivid detail in *ḥadīth* collections and in popular literature. See Y. Haddad and Jane I. Smith, *The Islamic Understanding of Death and Resurrection* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981).

²¹ *Naw*: "Effort is lost in his heart," *Dān*: "... and gets lost in the heart."

²² *Ganj*, *Naw*, and *Dān*: "the lights of the righteous spirits of humans and *jinn*."

differing abilities and disparate levels of attainment. The sky, stars, sun and moon that he sees comprise the heavens of the physical "human realm" (*malakūt-i mulk-i ālāq*) and the earth of the spiritual "Realm of Sovereignty" (*mulk-i malakūt-i anfus*). Sometimes, however, they are the lights of the archangels, and of the prophets and saints (upon them be peace).

17. The sparks of fire that he sees in the beginning are signs of the mystic having traversed the element of fire in his own body. His flying and walking through the air is a sign of his passing the element of air. Swimming in the sea or in rivers, and walking on water indicates that the mystic has passed the element of water in his body. Rising up above streets, houses and walls is a sign of the mystic's having traversed the earthy portion of himself which is also part of the composition of a human being. Each time the mystic's bodily parts are purified of the darkness of the morsels of sensual delight, beautifully colored, pure, swirling and swiftly moving fires become visible. He also witnesses clean, bright air; illuminated waters; wide streets; clean and majestic palaces; beautifully spread carpets; and sumptuous feasts laid out. But if the mystic's bodily parts are sullied by morsels of sensual delight and soiled by desires of the soul, he sees the opposite of this, such as frightening, slow-moving, smoke-filled fires in which he falls and is burned. He sees a cauldron into which he is hurled; he sees dark winds, lightening, frightening thunderbolts, and terrifying darkness in which he is trapped; turbid waters full of filth in which he falls and is polluted; and he sees narrow, dark streets, and ruined, filthy palaces in which he gets lost. Whenever he tries to come out of this wilderness, he is surrounded on all sides by high walls and hills of sand on which he walks with great difficulty. He sees deep, dark pits into which he falls. Dangerous beasts such as the snake,²³ scorpion, lion, leopard, bear, boar, and their like become apparent at this stage and cause him grief. [46v] The mystic must transcend the attributes of the inciteful soul in order to be delivered [from this state]. To the degree that the darkness of the morsels of sensual delight is exchanged for the purity of the morsels of that which is just, blameworthy attributes are transformed into praiseworthy ones, and these detestable images are transformed into noble ones, such as sheep, deer, and colorful and melodious birds.

18. There comes a time when the animal form gets discarded and the individual is dressed in human form, at which point he sees himself as a mystical traveller. And as the purity of the morsel of that which is just increases, so too does its beauty. The good conduct of the mystic is the visible sign of the beauty of this invisible form.

19. There comes a time when the dark human person is illuminated; in fact, he becomes light personified.²⁴ At this stage, the mystic learns of the re-

²³ *New and Dān*: add "and 'ant (*mār*)."

²⁴ *New and Dān*: "the dark person becomes like light personified"

ality of the subtle substance of I-ness (*latīfa-yi anāniyyat*), and of the cultivation of the acquired body (*badan-i muktasab*) which will abide with him. He obtains knowledge of the inner meaning of the words of the "master of ascetics," Ibrāhīm b. Adham (d. 162/778-9) (may God sanctify his spirit), who said: "Consider your food lawful, and do not stay awake by night and fast by day."²⁵ Exert great effort in obtaining lawful sustenance, which is a lawful morsel and with which the human body is strengthened and from which the profession of faith (*kalima-yi tayyiba*) is obtained, since the Prophet (upon him be peace) says:²⁶ "Any flesh that derives from the unlawful, is more appropriate for the fire [than for eating]."²⁷

20. Know for certain that the mystic's advancement on the path is four-sixths worship of God through observing the [lawful nature of] the morsel, one sixth recollection, and one-sixth following the guidance of the master. If, God forbid, he is plagued by an unlawful morsel, he should not eat even the minutest amount. If there is any doubt [about its lawful nature], he should abstain from satiation, and if it is lawful he should avoid excess. He should eat in such an amount that he remains hungry, so that he does not feel sluggish and be overtaken by sleep and turn away from recollection. He should observe moderation lest he fall into the misfortune of excess or deficiency (*ifrāt wa tafrit*). He must also guard against temptation. Know that God (may He be exalted) says: "Indeed, Allah does not love transgressors" (5:87); these are the people who forbid lawful morsels unto themselves. And He says: "Indeed, He does not love the wasteful" (7:31);²⁸ these are the people who engage in gluttony. "Eat and drink, but do not be wasteful" (7:31) should be taken as a model, and he should emulate the tradition of God's prophet (may peace be upon him) and not transgress it, since "to exceed perfection is an error." Thus today you must try to adorn your being with praiseworthy attributes and pleasant qualities so that [47r] tomorrow you might not be trapped in bitter agony in the deepest pits of hell. Embody noble characteristics so that you may be rewarded with eternal blessings in the gardens of Paradise.²⁹ Whosoever does not purify his body today yet hopes for Paradise is like a person who does not sow seeds in the ground in autumn but hopes for grain at harvest time. In fact, there is no one more bootless than him,³⁰ for the Prophet of God (may He be exalted) has said: "This world is the field from which

²⁵ This statement appears to completely contradict the beliefs and practices of Ibrāhīm b. Adham who is remembered as a Buddha-like prince who abandoned his worldly life for one of extreme asceticism.

²⁶ *Gen*: ends at this point.

²⁷ Paraphrase of a *ḥadīth* found in at-Tirmidhi, ad-Dārimī, and Ibn Hanbal.

²⁸ *New*: missing "Indeed, Allāh does not love transgressors"... unto themselves. And He says:" *Ḍān*: missing "These are the people... wasteful"

²⁹ *Ḍān*: "And do not embody detestable characteristics so that you may be rewarded with eternal blessings in the gardens of Paradise."

³⁰ *New* and *Ḍān*: "In fact, more ignorant than him."

the harvest is reaped in the afterlife."³¹ When this world comes to an end and the tools which he could have used for sowing are taken away, and the seeds of worldly appetites do not turn green, then such a person will say: "O Lord! We have seen and heard, so send us back. We shall do the right thing, for we have come to believe with certainty" (32:12).³² But this plea will not be heard, and it will be said in reply: "Remain condemned in it, and do not speak to Me" (23:108).

21. My friend, accept this advice and do not share in the arrogance of Satan (a verse):

Sow seeds today, for tomorrow
Nothing will come of begging.

22. Pleading: "Pour a little water over us or give us a little of what God has given you" (7:50) will only increase [their] thirst, and no heart will be forgiven for crying: "O Lord! Our misery overwhelmed us" (23:106). Do not leave today's task onto tomorrow. One must be industrious, not lazy; one must be extraordinary, not common;³³ one must be thankful, not disbelieving. Unbelief consists of not recognizing the nature of God's blessings contained in what He has said regarding the reality of your being. As a consequence, you make this life—which is itself a great blessing—into an assemblage of disobedience to God. Indeed, a disbeliever is not only one who has not physically uttered the profession of faith; anyone who is deprived of the meaning of this formula is also a disbeliever. One must strive so that not one precious soul is lost, and that you accord the just due of every soul, which is a noble substance (*jawharī az jawāhir-i sharīfa*). Thus might you be among those who are thankful for God's blessings.

23. I was talking about lights and suddenly I left that issue. Let me now return to the subject at hand. When I was describing the lights of the inner mystery, spirit, inmost being, heart and soul, I did not remember the light of Satan. It appears necessary that I explain the light of fire and describe its characteristics lest the mystic in seclusion (*khalwātī*) think that Satan does not enter into anything which possesses the attribute of luminescence.

24. One must know, then, that the light of Satan, which is manifested in the beginning, is like a puppet of foul-colored fire. He sees its curtain on the face of the earth covering everything with a dark red fire; a drop of black blood becomes obscured on the face of this redness,³⁴ and the heart [47v] is constricted³⁵ by looking at it so that the mystic can only engage in recollection with difficulty. All his body parts ache, such that you might say he was suffer-

³¹ Not a canonical *ḥadīth* but a well known proverb.

³² *Car.* missing "for we have come to believe with certainty."

³³ *Ḍān.* "One must be attentive (*ḥadhīr*), not heedless (*ghāfil*)."

³⁴ *Naw* and *Ḍān.* "A spot like dark blood appearing on the face of that redness"

³⁵ *Naw* and *Ḍān.* miserable.

ing a seizure at this time. But when he recalls his master with complete concentration and occupies himself with recollection, the puppet falls to the earth and the foul-colored curtain turns to nought. The mystic's body feels light, and pure recollection flows on his tongue. Then the fire of recollection starts to rise, and the mystic experiences a state of pleasure and ease.

25. One must know, furthermore, that every part of the mystic's body has a specific light, and every act of devotion also has a light. The details of these lights are beyond the scope of this treatise. "None knows the armies of your Lord save Himself" (74:31). Earlier masters, may God sanctify their spirits, have not written as much as I have committed to paper lest pretenders present these as their own ideas and ensnare mystics in the net of their deception.³⁶ But the strength of that friend's [i.e. Muḥammad-i Khurd] will was such that I have explained an infinitesimal amount of the secrets of illumination. And in this state it occurred to me that God (may He be exalted) says: "Thereby He leads many astray, and thereby He guides many; yet He leads astray none but those who transgress, who, having sealed it, break God's covenant, dividing what He ordained joined; and those who spread corruption in the land will surely suffer" (2:26-27). Know that going astray and being rightly guided are by His command Who "thereby guides whosoever He wishes, and leads astray whosoever He wishes." "Whoever is guided by God is rightly guided, but whosoever goes astray will not find a guide to show him the right path" (18:17).³⁷ I eliminated my own volition and was content with God's judgement, and entrusted control of the pen of elucidation to the fingers. And inasmuch as He wishes, He writes the meanings of the invisible dimension on the page of the visible, and seats the blessed people at His sumptuous table, and relegates the wretched to the torments and pits of hell for disbelieving in the lights.³⁸ "God does as He wishes" (14:27) "and ordains what He wills" (5:1).

26. The purpose of this is to say that when the mystic sees the effect³⁹ within himself (which is the acceptance of the words of mystical saints), he put his foot forward on the mystical path with full confidence. He then witnesses the lights, obtains knowledge of the signs of the path, and comprehends the real nature of the removal of the veils and lifting of the covers. It is vital that, until his dying breath, he should not be heedless for one instant, since the veil of darkness falls in every instant in the visible realm which is itself nothing but absolute darkness and nothingness. If he is not occupied with the removal of this veil, veils upon veils [48r] will descend and the lights will disappear

³⁶ *Naw and Dān*: "... present this as the world of their own religious message and hurl mystics into the trap of their own deception."

³⁷ *Dān*: "Going astray and perishing are not by His command: 'He leads astray whom He will and guides whom He will' (93:16 and others), 'and he is rightly guided, but whosoever goes astray will not find a guide to show him the right path' (18:17)."

³⁸ *Dān*: missing "and relegates the wretched the lights."

³⁹ *Naw and Dān*. add "of this divine favor (*lawfiq*)."

behind the curtain. [The mystic must be constantly occupied with their removal] lest Satan communicate false ideas to the soul and turn it away from the path so that it apostatizes.⁴⁰ The masters, may God sanctify their souls, have said: "one who apostatizes from the religious law (*shariʿa*) attains his former status if he says the profession of faith: "There is no deity but God, and Muḥammad is the messenger of God" just once; but all the efforts of the humans and *jinn* cannot return to his former status one who apostatizes from the mystical path." May God protects us from apostasy after belief, from paucity after plenty.

27. Know, in addition, that ablution possesses a great light which illuminates the dark seclusion. This light resembles the sun and appears opposite the forehead of the mystic. As soon as the mystic raises his eyes to see it, it rises upwards until a mountain appears above the place of seclusion and that disc shines forth from above the head of the mystic and illuminates the entire place of seclusion. Most often this light appears when the mystic has returned from performing his ablutions and has occupied himself with offering thanks for their successful performance. However, in the end he sees the disc, which he [previously] saw above him, in the center of his own breast which is the place from which it comes out. This disc is subtler than the sun and its light is pure, having come out from behind the colored garment.

28. The novice mystic sees lights and a variety of colors just outside the place of seclusion, which is illuminated with a light by which one can see all the people of the world. This is the result of the fire of recollection's power. And sometimes a circle appears opposite the mystic and colored lights come out of it, just like a spring out of which water flows. This is the sign of the transformation of the inciteful and censorious soul (*nafs-i ammāra wa lawwāma*) through the attributes of comfort and contentment. But know that seventy thousand veils of light and darkness are in the mystic's path, just as the Prophet (may peace be upon him) has said but which is not explained in any book. I will discuss them here cursorily, summarizing them in seven curtains.

29. The first curtain is of the invisible realm of Satan which is turbid, and 10,000 veils must be lifted at this stage. After this is the curtain of the invisible realm of the soul, the curtain of which is blue, and 10,000 additional veils must be removed at this stage. After this is the curtain of the invisible realm of the heart which is red and ruby-colored, and 10,000 veils must be destroyed in this stage. Then there is the curtain of the invisible realm of the inmost being, the color of which is white and extremely fine, and there are also 10,000 veils in this stage which must be lifted. After this is the curtain [48v] of the

⁴⁰ *Naw and Dîn*: "Lest Satan communicate false ideas to the soul and cause it to grow tired of travelling the path [*Naw*: "true path"] so that it turns away from the course and apostatizes from the path."

invisible of the spirit. The color of this curtain is a very pleasing yellow and there are 10,000 more veils at this stage which must be illuminated. After this there is the curtain of the invisible of the inner mystery, the color of which is an awesome pure black, and 10,000 more veils must be lifted at this stage. After this is the curtain of the hiddenmost mystery (*ghayb al-ghuyūb*); the color of its curtain is green and 10,000 additional veils lie at this threshold. And all these veils relate to the mystic's being. It is he who is veiled by these veils which are brought about by God, not God that is veiled. Nothing can veil God.

30. After the lifting of these 70,000 veils he reaches the veil of "Divine Grandeur" (*ḥijāb-i kibriyā*) just as the Prophet (upon him be peace) says: "His veil is of light (fire, according to another tradition). If it were lifted, the splendor of His face would burn whatever turned its eyes towards it."⁴¹ It is necessary at this stage that he place his head on the threshold of supplication (*āstāna-yi 'ajz*) so that a rapturous occurrence (*jadhba*) from that realm might shine down on his body, overcome him and transport him to the divine presence, for this is the desired effect. If this does not happen, then he must become a servant at the threshold of eternality (*āstāna-yi šamadiyyat*) and place his head upon the threshold of servitude (*āstāna-yi 'ubūdiyyat*) until such time that God opens that door through grace and bounty. The key to that door is in the hands of His beloved (upon him be peace), and one should not seek it from anyone but him lest one be eternally debarred.

31. It is my hope that my associates will want to discover this state through striving, not through words alone, so that they might become people who strive in religion. When their hearts' eye (*dida-yi jānishān*) is illuminated with these lights, let them remember this poor [mystic] with a small prayer. And let them deem it necessary to pray continually for the spirits of the masters, without the guidance of whose efforts, one cannot conclude this formidable journey. Let their tongues be continuously moving with prayers for the spirit of the "Joy of the World" [i.e. Muḥammad], upon him be the most eminent salutations and best prayers. Praise be to God at all times.⁴²

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⁴¹ This is a canonical tradition, versions of which are found in Muslim (Īmān, 293, 294); Ibn Māja (muqaddima 13); and Ibn Ḥanbal (4, 401, 405). Simnānī is quoting the tradition as recorded by Muslim. *New* ends at this point.

⁴² *Dāḥ*: "And the blessings of God upon the best of His creatures, Muḥammad, and upon his family and companions."

BOOK REVIEWS

Economic Life in Ottoman Jerusalem. By Amnon Cohen. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989. VII plus 179 pp., n.p.

This book is the result of painstaking research in the records of Jerusalem's Islamic Court. Succinct and lucidly written, it patiently reconstructs a large section of "every day life" in Ottoman Jerusalem. Although not covering all aspects of economic activities of the city, but only "butchers and meat consumption," "soap production and olive oil," and "flour and bread," and restricted to the study of 16th century Jerusalem, it is still an original contribution to the understanding of Ottoman history and society in Palestine. This contribution is—among other things—evident on two levels: firstly, it does provide students of late Islamic history with an immense new knowledge of aspects of economic activities inside an urban center of the Ottoman Arab land, of the social nexus in Jerusalem and of its commercial relations with the rest of the empire beyond, and it has further borne out other established concepts of the urban socio-economic structure during that era. Secondly, this study makes a significant input to the ensuing debate regarding the nature of relations between the Ottoman center and its "peripheries," and presents some answers to the fundamental question of whether the decline of Arab Islamic cities after the Ottoman conquest came as a result of inherent ills in the Ottoman system itself or for other reasons.

Here are some examples of what Cohen's study can reveal at the first level: Three important official posts controlled the conjunction between the state and society, the *qādi* (judge), the *sahib al-shurta* (the head of the police force) and the *muhtasib* (the official in charge of promoting good and forbidding evil). Among these three pillars of the traditional Islamic state and society, the *qādi* was the most influential. He was an *ʿālim* appointed directly by Istanbul and belonged to the *Hanafite* school of *fiqh*, the official *madhhab* of the Ottomans. Where the governor was to represent the authority of the state in fields of administration and security, the *qādi* was to emphasize its determination to dispense universal justice, entrusted as he was to resolve cases presented to him, according to Islamic *shariʿa*; he was considered the local reference for the society, in problems arising within its ranks or between its members and government officials. Moreover, the *qādi's* role extended to reach various aspects of daily activities and organizations of the society, including the appointment of the *muhtasib*, the rectification of the appointment of the guild's head (*raʾīs al-taʾiifa*) who was usually chosen by the guild's members, and in districts like Jerusalem, where barley and olives were the most important agricultural products, the *qādi* was the sole authority in declaring their ripening and giving the orders to be harvested. Pricing, standards of weight and measurement and the activities of import and export were also supervised by the *qādīs*. In short, he held in his domain both the judicial and municipal responsibilities at the same time. It is known that the reconciliation between the *ʿulamāʾ* class and the state in the Islamic society started as early as the mid-thirteenth century or the beginning of the Mamluk state. In the Ottoman system, a large section of the *ʿulamāʾ* occupied official posts and—following the Ottoman model—were centrally organized in an hierarchy. The vast authority of the *qādi* (bearing in mind that the post of *mufti* was also occupied by an *ʿālim*) was also occupied by an *ʿālim* shows how powerful and relevant the *ʿulamāʾ's* role was in the Ottoman life, even after they had been integrated into the state apparatus. The decline in their status from the mid-19th century onwards is the result of the modernization process sweeping over the Ottoman state and society rather than their close relationship with the Mamluk-Ottoman states.

Another interesting feature of the socio-economic life of Ottoman Jerusalem, and other similar urban centers, was the compartmentalization of the society in a framework of harmony, indicative of which was the active role played by the *tawāʾif* or *asnāf* (guilds). Each profession has its own organization/guild, and has its elected head of the guild who represented its members before the authorities in matters concerning the guild's defined duties, responsibilities and rights. Millers, bakers, cotton weavers, butchers, soap manufacturers etc. had their own guilds and referred to a recognized chief. Adherence of merchants, craftsmen and artisans to the laws and norms were watched over by the *muhtasib* and superior to all was the *qādi*. If a shortage in meat supply arose, the head of the butchers' guild would be answerable to the *muhtasib* and the *qādi*; and similarly, members of the millers' guild were to provide bakeries with their daily requirements of flour and the latter to supply the city with its daily consumption of bread.

Cohen does not reach grand conclusions in this study. However, it is still relevant that as the *ulama* institution played a major role in safeguarding stability in the Islamic traditional civil society and the balance between the state and the *jama'a* (community), the guilds were equally essential in preserving the dynamics of urban life and its prosperity, and were crucial in defending the social interests against the state and in precluding it from overpowering the individual. Traditionally, a close link evolved between the guilds and the *ulama* class, a relationship that additionally strengthened the guilds' position and shielded them with religious legitimacy.

Also, Cohen's book has indirectly contributed to the much larger debate on the urban decline in the Arab Ottoman area, and has shown that even if the turbulent last decades of the Mamluk and the early years of the Ottoman rule in Jerusalem had afflicted the city's economic and demographic status, it did witness a speedy recovery during the second half of the 16th century. The sudden deterioration in economic life in Jerusalem, and presumably of other Ottoman urban centers, is a more complicated phenomenon.

As soon as the Ottoman administrative structure became operative (1538-9), the new governor of Jerusalem initiated a major construction project to rebuild the walls surrounding the city in order to improve its security. Another essential civil project was also carried out by the Ottoman authorities during that period. Since Jerusalem, throughout its history, suffered from lack of an adequate supply of water, the new administration devised various systems to overcome this chronic problem, the major undertaking of which was to construct an aquaduct to bring water to the city from the springs at Irtās, ten miles to the south. Other steps were taken to encourage commercial activities in and with the city, including the exemption of spices, onion, garlic, raisins and grains for bread baking, sold in Jerusalem, from all taxes.

Indications of expansion in the city's commercial and economic life during the 16th century can be easily noted in Cohen's study. Soap, for example, a major product in the city, showed a substantial increase, as the few numbers of soap factories operating during the early years of the Ottoman conquest rose to 18 by the second half of the 16th century. Jerusalem exported soap to several neighboring cities (long before Nablus became an important center for soap production) and to Egypt and Yemen, and even attempts were made to reach Cyprus and north European markets. Olive oil was in much demand for food consumption as well as for soap production in Istanbul. Although Palestine was—and still is—abundantly endowed with olive groves, it contributed no olive oil at all to the capital market which was satisfied by import from north Africa, since the oil of Palestine was either consumed locally or used for soap production.

Building new mills and bakeries or re-activating old ones that had not been in use for many years was a characteristic of 16th century Jerusalem which indicated a rise in bread consumption. Meat consumption was similarly on the rise during the same period, but most outstanding was the nearly doubling of the population (from 9000 to 15000) between the early years of the Ottoman rule to the mid-century (a period of less than 35 years), which consequently stimulated all other sectors of economic activity from real estate to vegetable consumption. By the 1590's, however, signs of economic decline and stagnation were beginning to be markedly evident. Cohen points out the main causes as "the international flow of precious metals (from the newly discovered Americas to the Mediterranean which led to generate an inflationary process in the Ottoman domain), high levels of military expenditure, changes in trade patterns (internationally) and growing demographic pressures."

This book studies only three major sectors of economic life in 16th century Jerusalem; it does not cover other important parts, especially agriculture and land distribution and reclamation of the surrounding agricultural zone of the city, nor does it study the movement of precious metal and jewelry, or the markets of clothes, spices, vegetables etc. Even though the conclusions reached about the rise and decline of economic life in Arab urban centers of the Ottoman empire may appear more firm, there is still much room for further debate. Yet, Cohen's book does prove, once again, the importance of the Islamic courts' annals as an immense source of material for students of Ottoman history.

Sultanes Oubliées: Femmes chefs d'Etat en Islam. By Fatima Mernissi. Paris: Albin Michel, 1990. xx plus 291 pp.

A woman at the head of a Muslim state? The idea seems so improbable that many assumed Benazir Bhutto, when she became prime minister of Pakistan in 1988, must be the first and only example. For the eminent Moroccan sociologist Fatima Mernissi, the question offered an irresistible opportunity to apply her talents to historical research. The result is this delightful book, which sheds light not only on the lives and reigns of eighteen women rulers in various parts of the Muslim world between the eleventh and seventeenth centuries A.D., but on much else as well.

Inviting the reader to join her in an adventure of detective work, Mernissi leads us on a tour of scattered points in Islamic time and space, sharing, as she proceeds, her knowledge and her reflections on a wide range of subjects. Here and there, the tour is punctuated agreeably by flashes of intimacy or humor as, for example, the author shows a glimpse of herself as a schoolgirl skipping rope to the memorized text of a speech by a notorious Umayyad executioner, or drolly notes Allah's unresponsiveness to the aspirations of one female ruler, forced to abandon her throne shortly after striking coins with the inscription: "May Allah eternalize her reign." The refreshing style may even seem rambling at first, as we do not get down to those eighteen selected women until almost half-way through the book. But in reality we have already advanced well into the essentials of the inquiry by examining the distinctively Islamic institutions of caliphate, imamate and sultanate, reviewing titles of rulership applicable to women, noting the abundant examples of women exercising real but not officially recognized political power from the veiled confines of the harem, and eventually deciding on criteria that narrowly limit the number of indisputable female rulers in Muslim history. The work, which might be still further enhanced by adding an index, is thoroughly documented with copious endnotes.

Relying principally on Arabic sources, Mernissi uncovers a set of largely forgotten women rulers who are Turks, Mongols, Indonesians, even Maldivians, but rarely Arabs. And the three Arab exceptions reach their thrones in the Isma'ili world of the Fātimid empire, with Yemen the setting of the only two to meet the strictest criterion of having their names mentioned in the *khutba*. No more or less able or cruel than their male counterparts when considered collectively, these Muslim queens differ widely one from another. The one common thread, a necessary though not a sufficient condition for a Muslim woman to reach the throne, is that each was either the wife or the daughter of a male ruler. And this, as the author points out, is a condition also met by the woman whose contemporary rise to the head of a government inspired this book. Although Benazir Bhutto no longer holds high office, the validity of the point has recently been demonstrated once again with Begum Khaleda Zia's becoming prime minister of Bangladesh. (Indeed, a similar pattern can be observed in non-Muslim countries in the same region, notably India and Sri Lanka.)

For Fatima Mernissi, the lifting of veils—those that shroud history like those that conceal women—is essential. Most revolutionary, she contends, is removal of the veil separating the ruler from the common people, which comes with genuine democratization and the extension of human rights to all, female and male. This engaging book adds to her contributions to movement toward these goals.

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Greater Syria: The History of an Ambition. By Daniel Pipes. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990. viii plus 240 pp. Maps. Illustrations. n.p.

Daniel Pipes seeks to establish two points in *Greater Syria*. First, he claims that pan-Syrian nationalism has had a greater impact on regional politics than is usually attributed to it. Second, he believes that since 1974 Hafez al-Asad's regime has pursued a foreign policy aspiring to recreate Greater Syria. The first two chapters on the career of Pan-Syrian nationalism from the end of the

Ottoman Empire until 1973 sustain the assertion of pan-Syrian nationalism's historical significance. By contrast, the last two chapters not only fail to support Pipes' argument about Asad's foreign policy, they actually contradict it.

The first chapter, "Background and Changes," describes the origin and various usages of Syria as a geographical term from antiquity to modern times. It also describes the population and ethnography of Syria, laying emphasis on the sectarian aspect of society and the large number of religious minorities. Pipes then gives an account of Syria's partition after World War I and the various forms of nationalism that emerged during the interwar era. There follows a lengthy comparison between pan-Arabism and pan-Syrianism and a distinction between pure pan-Syrianism, defined by Antun Sa'ada's Syrian Social National Party, and pragmatic pan-Syrianism, as practiced by Iraqi and Transjordanian branches of the Hashemite clan. In "Failed Efforts to Constitute Greater Syria," Pipes reviews fifty years of futile efforts by Lebanese Muslims, Hashemite dynasts, Syrians, and Palestinians to reverse the verdict of San Remo dividing Syria into several states.

The second half of the book is devoted to proving Asad's commitment to Greater Syria. "Lesser Syria's Dominance, 1974-1988" compiles statements and events that Pipes believes demonstrate this commitment. The final chapter, "Changes in Lesser Syria," proposes that Asad adopted pan-Syrianism because his "Alawi regime" lacks domestic legitimacy and therefore is forced to purchase Syrians' acquiescence by pursuing a foreign policy that resonates with their sense of betrayal by history.

This work will appeal to those already convinced of the author's thesis. I doubt a careful reader will find the evidence persuasive. In fact, Pipes himself discounts his thesis regarding Asad's pan-Syrian ambitions. On page 147 he agrees that "Syria does not seek a Greater Syria, only influence over its neighbors." He goes on to state that "a Syria in which Damascus enjoys predominant influence over Lebanon, Palestine, and Jordan is also a Greater Syria." Advocates of Greater Syria since the end of the Ottoman Empire have sought to erase the lines drawn by European powers: they have not struggled for the preeminence of one state over the rest. Regional domination is not identical with political unification.

The author's approach to Syrian politics and society is to view them through the lens of communalism. It seems the modern history of the Arab East can be reduced to the interaction among Sunni, Druze, Alawi, Christian, and Shi'a. While urban-rural differences do make infrequent appearances in the analysis, social classes are non-existent in this work. Thus, we have a history of sects and sectarian rivalries. This approach may appeal to some observers of the Middle East, but relying on it to explain virtually everything strikes this reviewer as reductionist.

In addition to this conceptual problem, there are frequent methodological errors. Most notable is an uncritical approach to sources. Thus on page 20 we learn that the French chief of information for the Middle East wrote in 1918 that it would be "impossible to create a native Syrian kingdom." Pipes cites this authority to support the nonexistence of a Syrian nation at the time. Of course, that source may be correct, but it would be advisable to treat such a partisan observer's views with caution because he did represent a nation that sought to deny Syrians independence. In the later chapters on contemporary Syria, Pipes puts great stock in sources hostile to the regime, such as the Muslim Brothers, Israeli officials, and western critics. To his credit Pipes also cites views contrary to his own, though often in order to dismiss them as "primitive" and "odd" (page 147).

In short, there is much to find fault with in this book. The first half does have the merit of compacting pan-Syrianism's history between 1920 and 1970. The second half fails to sustain the author's thesis and offers a reductionist analysis of contemporary Syrian politics.

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Islam and Human Rights: Tradition and Politics. By Ann Elizabeth Mayer. Boulder, Co.: Westview Press, Inc., 1991. 258 pp. \$39.95.

This timely book is a measured challenge to the orthodox authors of Islamic human rights schemes. Starting with the proposition that Islamic legal tradition has historically been a culture of argument (p. xiii), the author cogently differentiates between the prescriptive-normative values of Islam and the empirical-legal order and institutions in place in Muslim countries. The author makes a distinction between Islam as a world religion and the new legislation mandating a distinctive Islamic treatment of rights' issues. The latter emerges as the main source of conflict between existing practices and international norms. To demonstrate this, the author undertakes a comparative legal study of the Islamization process and its impact on human rights in Iran, Pakistan, and the Sudan. While repudiating the position of those cultural relativists that place states' laws and politics above the rights and freedoms of the individual, the author points out that "the fact that democratization has been consistently seen as a threat by regimes committed to Islamization suggests that cultural relativists who assume the official Islamization measures necessarily express popular mandates for a revival of traditional local culture are mistaken." (p. 20)

Relating Islamization to the decline in the quality of the administration of justice, Mayer contends that such Islamization programs have taken the form of rewriting constitutional rights and inserting various vague Islamic qualifications (Iran), of suspending constitutional rights provisions and proclaiming a state of emergency (the Sudan-1984), and of ceasing constitutional rights and imposition of martial law (Pakistan, 1977-85). The bottomline is that Islamization has undermined the autonomy of legal institutions in these countries (p. 40)

Prior to exploring Islamization programs, the author shows the incompatibility of orthodox Islamic thinking with that of the concept of international human rights. Although she finds in the Islamic heritage many philosophical concepts, humanistic values, and moral principles capable of being adapted to human rights principles, she nonetheless argues that the *Ulamā'* have historically remained divided on the merits of constitutionalism and on whether the *Shari'a* and individual freedoms are compatible. Thus, much of the effort to conform to internationally recognized norms has led to ambivalence in Islamic thinking regarding human rights issues.

Mayer frequently refutes the application of pre-modern Islamic thinking to the highly complex and drastically changed circumstances of contemporary states. She rejects the anachronistic views of Islamic thinking that "presumed that in an Islamic setting individual-state tensions do not arise." (p. 65) For her this amounts to turning a blind eye to the intense conflicts between the interests of citizens and the government that have characterized the twentieth century's politics. She further notes that "the idealized schemes of Muslim ruler and Muslim ruled both acting in concert and in common obedience to the divine law that are invoked in the cited passages were not realized in practice." (p. 67) Her reluctance to accept such an idealized vision of Islamic social harmony is, in point of historical fact, well-warranted.

Mayer argues that there exists neither a definitive guidance in the pre-modern *Shari'a* on the proper scope of human rights, nor a settled doctrine in contemporary Islamic thought, and worse yet, nor a generally recognized central authority for resolving disputed points of *Shari'a* doctrine. In the face of such ambiguities in rights formulation, human rights are often diluted or denied in the interest of the state. (p. 78) The state resorts to Islamization measures "as a device for restricting individual freedoms and keeping the individual in a subordinate place vis-à-vis the government and society." (p. 91) That combined with the ambiguities associated with the *Shari'a* criteria, further clouds the boundaries on state infringement of individual rights.

In the ensuing chapters (5-7), the author treats such subjects as equality, and the rights of women and non-Muslims in a Muslim society. In the case of women, Mayer argues that, "Not only did the Qur'an attack institutions of pre-Islamic Arabia that contributed to women's degraded and vulnerable status, but Islam also conferred rights on women in the seventh century that women in the West were unable to obtain until quite recently." (p. 110) By examining the Universal Islamic Declaration of Human Rights (UIDHR), especially its Arabic version, the author points to the inequality of the sexes implied in several parts of the document. Similarly, she finds cases of forced marriage (so totally incompatible with the ideal of marriage as a union of harmony), inheritance law and the

divorce rights (consistent with the *Shari'a* regime of male privilege) based on a revival of pre-modern *Shari'a* rules. (p. 130)

In various approaches to women's rights, notes the author, there is no real inclination to "recognize women as full, equal human beings who deserve the same rights and freedoms as men." She goes on to make perhaps the boldest statement in her book based on an ultra conservative interpretation of Islam, "...discrimination against women is treated as something entirely natural—in much the same way that people in the West think it is natural that mentally defective persons and young children must be denied certain rights and freedoms." (p. 136) Mayer grossly overstates the point about the inherent belief in female inferiority even among conservative Muslims. In Muslim countries, some women, given the choice and liberty, prefer the integrity, security, and the comfort of certain socially-defined role and status within the confinements of home while admittedly distancing themselves from the public spheres. For those who stress such a preference, exclusion from the public domain appears to be internalized and, hence, acceptable. Thus, Mayer's overall portrayal of the treatment of women with that of the mentally defective detracts from her argument.

In the case of non-Muslim minorities (ch.7), the author reminds us that the Muslim world has generally shown greater tolerance and humanity toward religious minorities than has the Christian West. In particular, she points out that "the treatment of the Jewish minority in Muslim societies stands out as fair and enlightened when compared to the dismal record of Christian European persecution of Jews over the centuries." (p. 148) In a rather sketchy manner, she then arrives at the conclusion that the status of non-Muslims improved with the rise of secular nationalism in the twentieth century. She then leaps to the statement that "Today, as the influence of secular nationalism has waned and the influence of Islam as a political ideology is mounting, Muslims are divided on the merits of reinstating the pre-modern *Shari'a* rules on *dhimmis* (Jews and Christians)." (p. 149) The reader at this point is left with no clue as to what gave rise to the resurgence of Islam as a political ideology. Her neglect of the recent historical context in which the present Islamic conception of human rights developed weakens the merits of her overall argument.

On freedom of religion in Islamic human rights schemes (ch. 8), she refers to the fact that there is no definitive interpretation of the Islamic sources of apostasy today and as such rethinking the *Shari'a* rule on apostasy has inexorably gained momentum. She is quite right when she maintains that, "There is diversity of opinion and ample ground for deciding that the pre-modern *Shari'a* rules on apostasy no longer apply." (p. 170) A legitimate argument can be made that many of the standards designed to safeguard non-Muslims minorities in the Muslim countries simply are not directed against laws or governmental action and are far too nebulous to determine what precisely constitutes hostility toward non-Muslims. Mayer aptly describes such recklessness: "The failure of a single one of these Islamic human rights schemes to take a position against the application of the *Shari'a* death penalty for apostasy means that the authors of these schemes have neglected to confront and resolve the main issues involved in harmonizing international human rights and *Shari'a* standards." (p. 187)

In the capstone chapter of the book (#9), devoted to assessing the interaction of politics and tradition, the author states that "...Islamic culture does not by itself account for the distinctive features of the schemes. Instead, such study proves that Islamic legal heritage is rich in elements that support principles of equality, freedom, democracy, and respect for human dignity and that at the grass-root level there is also widespread culture-based receptivity to human rights in Muslim milieus." (p. 190) Moderating her criticism of Muslim human rights schemes, Mayer displays some appreciation as a jurist for the fact that despite many shortcomings, "Islamic human rights do constitute a step forward in that they suggest that even Muslim conservatives have become persuaded that human rights can be integrated in Islamic culture—albeit only tentatively and partially." (p. 190) She then gives her arguments a totally unique and surprising practical twist by proposing the indigenization of international human rights. She suggests that human rights concepts be filtered through a transitional phase, "one in which international human rights schemes are disassembled and reconstructed to coincide with familiar categories and readjusted to fit conservative values and mores." (p. 191)

With little elaboration, she returns to the pessimistic views and the deficiencies that have characterized the Islamic human rights schemes throughout the book. In this sense, the book attempts to

deconstruct Islamic human rights schemes, but certainly falls short of reconstructing interactive universal human rights or providing any methodological or conceptual basis for that purpose. Instead, she chooses to dissect the cultural nationalism of Islam, showing that Islamic human rights schemes are mainly products of the political context in which they arise. (p. 207) Without even expounding on what she means by seeking a synthesis of Islamic and international human rights—a task that she accuses the Muslim world of disregarding—she brings the book to a conclusion. On balance, however, the book is an example of top-notch scholarship and adds significantly to our understanding of the obstacles to promoting and protecting human rights in the Muslim world.

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Studies in Near Eastern Culture and History. Edited by James A. Bellamy. (Michigan Series on the Middle East Number 2.) Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan, [1990] . x plus 225 pp. n.p.

This volume is in memory of Ernest T. Abdel-Massih, a noted, former professor of Arabic at the University of Michigan, and a scholar of Arabic and Berber Linguistics, who passed away on December 6, 1982.

Eighteen colleagues and former students of Abdel-Massih contributed essays to this volume, the ranges of which span many fields: Arabic linguistic topics (James A. Bellamy, Mary M. Levy, Ernest N. McCarus, Loraine K. Obler, and Raji M. Rammun); Arabic literary themes (Mustansir Mir); Hebrew teaching methodology (Edna Amir Coffin); Islamic history (Andrew S. Ehrenkreuz and K. Allin Luther); Semitic studies (Charles Krahmalkov, George E. Mandenhall, M. O'Conner); Biblical studies (David Noel Freedman and Gene M. Schramm); Ottoman studies (J. Stewart-Robinson); East-West literary contact (Gernot L. Windfuhr); translation of a chapter of a Palestinian's autobiography (Tervor LeGassick); and, finally, a difficult-to-characterize article on "Having a Dialogue with a work of History: A Checklist for Critical Examination and Evaluation" by Louis L. Orlin.

As can be seen from this list of topic categories, the volume is varied not only in themes, but also in the vantages of the subjects. However, it is natural for a memorial work such as this to include this diversity of topics, periodizations, methodologies, and various disciplines, etc. On the other hand, this diversity in one volume makes the task of a reviewer difficult. It is rare for any one person to claim knowledge about such diverse fields as in this volume. My comments, therefore, will be limited to a select number of the articles in this important work.

The book begins with a translation of "Selections from Sibawayhi" by James A. Bellamy. In these selections, the translator presents "snippets" from various chapters from Sibawayhi's *al-Kitāb*. The translation is smooth and rendered in idiomatic English which makes it very readable to the English reader, while at the same time preserving the original flavor of the Arabic text. A few observations are warranted here, nonetheless. Bellamy often provides the English translation without the actual citation of the Arabic original as used in *al-Kitāb*. See for example "a Tamimite (tribal name) am I," and "hated (is) he who hates you" (p. 8, 11, 11-12), "This (is) Abdallah", "In it (is) Abdallah" (p. 9, 11, 3-4), and "Abdallah, by my Lord" (p. 10, 1.9). The citation of the original Arabic sentences as in *al-Kitāb*, no matter how burdensome or time-consuming for typesetting, would have been more consistent to the rest of the article, in line with conventions of translation, and faithful to the original. In the example on p., 11, 4-5, Bellamy states "Here (is) Zayd" when, in fact, the original has "Here (is) 'Amr". This inconsistency is also seen in another respect. For example, the definition of 'Tamimi' (p.8) is rendered as '[tribal name]', whereas the same tribe (p.16, 1.16) is defined as '[the Eastern Arabs]'. This article, furthermore, is not without some production problems: a typo appears here and there: 'Banu Tamin' not 'Banu Tamin' (p. 16, 1.16). These are minor points and not intended to detract from the otherwise accurate and readable translation.

Ernest N. McCarus in "A Case of Semantic Reconstruction: the Egyptian Arabic Verbal Prefix Bi-" attempts to reconstruct the stages of the evolution of verbal prefix /bi/ in Egyptian Arabic with respect to the syntactic-semantic irregularity. McCarus maintains that he has traced the syntactic/semantic spread of /bi/ to a thousand years ago. Support is garnered here by McCarus from Cohen (1924) and Blau (1981), who advanced claims to the effect that /bi-/ was prefixed to imperfect tense verbs in Arabic texts written by Jewish and Christian writers. McCarus states that there is consensus that the origin of /bi-/ is attributed to the classical Arabic preposition /bi-/. A mention of two scholars who advocate this position is hardly a consensus.

Lorraine K. Obler's "Reflexes of Classical Arabic say'un 'thing' in the Modern Dialects: Synthetic Forms in Language Change," is "the core" of her 1975 University of Michigan doctoral dissertation, written under Abdel-Massih's guidance. Obler's presentation of her thesis is thorough and manifests a high level of sophistication of data analysis. My only observation on this article relates to generalizations that linguists at times make without some justification or substantiation of claims. Note Obler's phrases "...in the dialects east of Palestine..." and "...in the North African dialects..." The geographical regions referred to here are extensive with recognizable variations of social behavior, linguistic or otherwise. While Obler's statements are neat and handy to support an argument she was trying to advance, such statements are just misleading.

Raji M. Rammuny's "The Relation Between Al-Jurjāni and Modern Western Linguist" presents an excellent article on Al-Jurjāni's (1010-1078 A.D.) then new 'theory' on Arabic grammar. Al-Jurjāni advocated incorporating not only inflectional markers but levels of discourse, semantics, styles (registers) in the study of Arabic. These views, Rammuny maintains, echo "the modern linguistic thought about language from Ferdinand de Saussure up to the present age". Some of these views were expressed elsewhere in an earlier article by Rammuny (see *Historiographia Linguistica* Vol. XII, 3 (1985), pp. 351-371). It is refreshing to see present-day Arab linguists searching into their heritage to highlight the contribution of classical scholars, such as Al-Jurjāni, to current linguistic theories. Regrettably, such classical Muslim/Arab heritage is little known to Western scholars except for the few specialists. Rammuny's article is blemished by some typos (p. 178, l. 30 *styles* not *styes*) and transcription inconsistency (p. 178, l. 11 *al-Awāmi*/is often rendered *al-ʿawāmi*/elsewhere in the article).

Trevor LeGassick's "A Palestinian Journalist Looks Back" is a translation of the second chapter of the Palestinian journalist Nasir al-Din al-Nashashibi's autobiography *al-Hibr Aswad Aswad 'The Ink is Black, Black'* (Beirut, 1976). This book, LeGassick ascertains, gives the reader insight into "the conflict over personality and policy that have been significant in determining the course of events in Palestine and the Arab world in the past half century". The translation of the chapter is smooth and easy to read. LeGassick's extensive notes that allude to events or personalities mentioned by al-Nashashibi are helpful to the reader. As in other essays in this volume, LeGassick's suffers from inconsistency of transcribing Arabic names. Examine the two different transcriptions of 'Abd al-Ilāh (p. 55, l.13) and (p. 71, l.3). It is also perplexing to see that the same Arabic sound, namely /q/, is transcribed in two versions. For example, we see Ihsan 'Abd al-Quddūs (p.69, fn. 7), Ahmad al-Shuqairi (p.71, fn. 22), but Kāssem (pp. 70-71, fn. 20).

From the title of this work, one assumes the existence of only one cultural and historical representation of the Near East. It would have been more appropriate, in my view, to use the plural marker in the title and speak of Near Eastern cultures and histories, rather than the use of the singular.

As this book is a compilation of disparate articles by people hailing from different disciplines and orientations, the bibliographies of their contributions vary in organization and format. With little effort the editor could have standardized the different styles. All of this does not detract from the value of this important book which is a significant contribution to Near Eastern studies, cultures and histories.

Trends and Issues in Contemporary Arab Thought. By Issa J. Boullata. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990. xi plus 219 pp. Cloth \$44.50, paper \$14.95.

Israel's military humiliation of the Arab world in 1967 was the first, and greatest, in a succession of political, cultural, and economic blows over the next quarter-century which plunged the Arab world into a condition of profound self-doubt and despair. The malaise has prompted Arab intellectuals to produce a large and diverse body of literature addressing the problem of societal and cultural regeneration.

Issa Boullata has written a highly useful survey of this literature. The writers he analyzes include some of the foremost thinkers of North Africa and the eastern Arab world, as well as expatriates in Europe and the United States. Many of them utilize highly sophisticated theoretical approaches, and are producing admirably original ideas. Boullata himself utilizes the methods of discourse analysis to evaluate the content and social setting of the texts he has selected. Overall the approach is valuable, although occasionally the lucidity of his presentation is tarnished by the uncritical use of jargon he has borrowed from others, especially Althusser.

The book devotes chapters to such topics as the diverse evaluations of the Arab heritage, the modern relevance of Islam and the Qur'ān, dependency and cultural liberation, and feminist perspectives. Although Boullata tries to be fair to all bands of the spectrum, his commitments cause him to be more sympathetic to the secular left and to those writers who advocate great flexibility in adapting Islam to the modern world, than to those who seek to be consonant with the heritage of Islamic civilization. Among the thinkers he admires are Samir Amin, 'Abd al-Kabir al-Khatibi, Halim Barakat, Hisham Sharabi, and Muḥammad Arkun.

The role of the Arab intellectual today is highly problematic. Several of the writers covered in this book have produced profound and original contributions. Boullata, however, found that he was repeatedly frustrated by the lack of detail, clarity, or concreteness in their proposals. More often than not, they perpetuate a traditional intellectual elitism, and speak in such abstruse terms that they do not articulate a vision which can inspire the people. Due to widespread political repression in the Arab world, intellectuals do not wield great influence in their societies, and expatriates naturally have difficulty shaping the destiny of their home countries. Until the Arab countries make strides towards democratization, intellectuals will not be influential, but this book is a helpful guide to understanding what they are thinking about in the interim.

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Disorienting Encounters: Travels of a Moroccan Scholar in France in 1845-1846. The voyage of Muḥammad as-Saffar. Translated and Edited with introduction and notes by Susan Gilson Miller. Comparative Studies on Muslim Societies; 14. General Editor: Barbara D Metcalf. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992. xx plus 244 pp. illustrations, bibliography, index.

This is a highly readable translation of a mid-nineteenth century travel account by the Moroccan scholar Sid Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allah as-Saffar, who travelled to France as Secretary to the Ambassador of Morocco. The account has been rendered beautifully into English by Professor Miller.

The book documents the fifteen-day journey which as-Saffar, a 35 year old *ḥalīm*, undertook from Tetuan to Paris and his further stay in France which lasted from about two weeks. Other dignitaries who undertook the voyage "in addition to the ambassador," 'Ash'ash included Muḥammad al-Libadi and Ḥajj al-'Arabi al-'Attar—the ambassador's father-in-law and brother-in-law respectively. (p. 19)

In documenting this account, Muḥammad as-Saffar seems to be aware of the earlier travel accounts to the West in general, and to Paris in particular, by the Egyptian scholar at-Tahtawi. As-Saffar uses the traditional language of Islam as well as current secular expressions to explain his encounter with a highly advanced French (Christian?) society. The book is full in sudden shifts in the author's

style from prose to verse, especially when describing the beauty of women. Miller regards these shifts in style as a "deep sense of longing for the sensual experience" which is expressed in sudden "breaks of poetry." (p. 66) As-Saffar also quotes quite frequently from the Qur'an as well as the *Hadith* in support of some of his statements, and he quite often does that when he feels threatened by the views/things he witnesses.

As-Saffar makes a distinction between what he sees and what "they" tell him. Although he seems to be impressed by the military strength of the French, their women and the way government is organized, he is very critical of their excessive cleanliness (p. 164), and of their lack of creativity in food. (p. 167) Conscious of the weaknesses of Muslims of his times, he later becomes increasingly hostile, especially when he sees a copy of the Qur'an in their museum.

Miller draws an interesting comparison between as-Saffar and at-Tahtawi regarding the similarities and differences between their two missions. She contends that "Tahtawi was sent by a leadership [of Egypt] on the offensive," whereas as-Saffar went as a religious adviser to an ambassador who was "despatched by a leadership in retreat." (p. 57)

In this book, as-Saffar gives a sacred meaning to the concept of journey. Migration plays a significant part in the social imagination of the author. It is in this context that as-Saffar sees himself and his mission as migrating from the ordinary to the extra-ordinary; from the "humdrum" of native land to the "marvelous" of a distant land. The journey as a sacred experience, however, is full of problems—cultural as well as emotional. The traveller is afraid of getting influenced while visiting other lands. As-Saffar considered the "welfare of the Islamic community" as the supreme reason for undertaking such a journey. Since the traveller is emotionally attached to his own land and hence afraid of "dying far from home," (p. 50) the account is permeated by a deep sense of nostalgia.

Miller has done the reader a great service by providing extensive notes to the translation and by writing a highly moving introduction. She is also to be commended on the comprehensive list of sources (manuscripts and published sources), mainly in French and Arabic, which adds to the value of this work. This is a highly valuable book.

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Islamic Fundamentalism And Modernity. By William Montgomery Watt. New York: Routledge, 1989 (orig. ed., 1988) vi plus 158 pp.

In this book, W.M. Watt describes "the thinking of the fundamentalist Islamic scholars who dominated the standard traditional Islamic worldview and the self-image of Islam." Watt's book covers a great deal of territory and makes important assumptions about Islamic fundamentalism.

The book focuses on what Watt calls the traditional Islamic world-view which is the Muslim's claim that there is no development in the nature of man and nothing can be changed. It implies that if the present Muslim society is to succeed, it must do the same thing which Muḥammad and his disciples did in the seventh century in Arabia.

The traditional Islamic world view includes the idealization of Muḥammad as the most perfect person and the last prophet of God whose actions must all be emulated despite the fact that most of his actions were responses to the needs of his Arab society. There is also an assumption that Islam is the final religion and thus it has solutions to all human problems.

Watt explains that Muslims see Islam as self-sufficient, and claim that the Qur'an and *Hadith* contain all regulations and rules which all human beings need at any time and thus there is a lack of desire to work out any new theory or concept to attend to the challenges which were created by Western technologies and industries.

He also argues that another aspect of Muslim self-image is their division of this world into the abode of peace (*Dār al-Islām*) and the abode of war (*Dār al-harb*). This division tempts Muslims not to recognize the human rights of other peoples.

However, Watt responds to each traditional Islam worldview by critically analyzing what Muslims mean by it and how that world view is perceived by a Western observer. He points out that "the unchangingness thought" of Muslims is completely false because things have changed a lot and Islam itself has gone through many developments in its history. Perhaps Muslim fundamentalists were blinded to this fact because of their unrealistic attitude and unreadiness to apply historical methods to the history of their religion. In order to succeed, Watt assumes that Muslims must reach out, change their perception of education and apply the western historical methodology.

On the question of idealization of Muḥammad and his immediate disciples, Watt blames Muslims for not adequately acknowledging the borrowing of many ideas from previous scriptures, especially from the old and new testaments. Although Watt considers Muhammad a good prophet, a tribal leader, and a determined statesman, he points out that many responses and decisions that Muḥammad made were societally conditioned. They were responses to the events of seventh century Arab society. Watt thinks that giving the same reply today to modern problems would be outrageous and inhuman.

As to the finality of Islam, Watt boldly questions the validity of such a claim. According to him, the Qurʾān, which is said to hold the final true message, contains erroneous information about Jesus.

Still, after all that has been said about Islam and Muslims, it appears that Watt falls victim to his western environment. He sees solutions to all Muslim problems in following the western methodology and approach to history, in studying western philosophies, in adopting Christian scholars' model, in having unreserved belief in science and in trusting without suspicion the rules laid down by the United Nations so that Muslims could gain world recognition and sympathy.

However, despite Watt's criticism of Islam and Muslim self-images, he correctly admits that at least, "Islam may be perceived as no more than one part of God's plan for the salvation of humanity." Thus there are many ways to salvation.

Without doubt, Watt has made a valuable contribution in this work especially in his ability to give the history of Islam and its sects in a concise and very comprehensive manner. However, Watt thinks that all Muslims' problems are to be solved in following western patterns or employing Christian approaches. The solutions to problems in one culture do not necessarily apply to another.

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YUSHAU SODIQ

A Catalog of the Islamic Documents from al-Ḥaram ash-Sharīf in Jerusalem. By Donald P. Little. (Beiruter Texte und Studien, Band 29; Beirut: in Kommission bei Franz Steiner Verlag, 1984). Pp. x + 482 (with Arabic title pages and two pages of Arabic introduction). Appendix, pp. 389-400. Indices, 401-479. 85 DM.

Scholars of medieval Islamic history, especially of the Mamlūks in Palestine and Syria, must be grateful first to Amal Abul-Hajj Hull and Lindra Northrop Lyons and then to Donald P. Little for bringing this fascinating collection of documents to our attention. Little puts such scholars more in his debt by his careful cataloging of these documents, as presented in the present volume, and for having had the foresight to organize and preserve them for future study.

In a most readable narrative, Little introduces the catalog by explaining how he came to be interested in the collection and how he went about deciphering and ordering the 900 some odd documents described in this volume. They break down into two main groups. First is a collection of 28 documents written in Persian that seem to come from the Transcaucus as well as 14 documents written in Arabic related to the Persian documents. Second are the 850 or so documents in Arabic that related to Palestine and Syria under the Mamlūks, many of them from the period 793-797/1390-1395.

Little's introduction advances the thesis that as many as two-thirds of the Arabic documents in this latter category are records that belonged to, or were collected by, the Shāfi'i judge, and even chief judge, of Jerusalem during this period, namely, Sharaf al-Dīn al-Shāfi'i. The remaining documents, one of which goes back to as early as 664/1266, are considered by Little to have belonged to the Shāfi'i Court in Jerusalem. In his eyes, these documents are of importance, above all, simply as documents, but also for the study of Islamic law and of the history of Jerusalem and Palestine while under Mamlūk rule.

Whether attracted to the study of these documents for one of those reasons or for another not explored in Little's fine introduction, scholars of Islamic jurisprudence and Mamlūk history, in particular, and of Islamic history more generally must henceforth recognize the debt they owe to Donald P. Little and his predecessors in this all-important cataloging project. Finally, special mention must be made of the high quality printing of the catalog. The Imprimerie Catholique, aided here in no small measure by Franz Steiner Verlag, has once again proven that competent printing can be carried out even under the most trying of circumstances.

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Interreligious Documents I: Guidelines for Dialogue Between Christians and Muslims. (revised ed.). Prepared by Maurice Borrmans. Translated from the French by R. Marston Speight. New York: Paulist Press, 1990. (orig. ed., 1970) (vi plus 132 pp.) Appendix: Organized Occasions for Muslim-Christian dialogue in the last twenty years. Bibliography. Index. \$12.95.

This brief volume is a significant and useful summary of engagement in dialogue between Christians and Muslims over two decades. Authored by an experienced Roman Catholic, the *Guidelines* shows a breadth of scope that takes into account not only involvement of Catholics, but also of Protestants and Orthodox Christians, as well as of various Muslims. This booklet sets forth both a plea and an expectation for greater openness, as well as an urge to undertake honest confrontation of both similarities and differences between Christians and Muslims. Though it reports on twenty years of conferences and consultations its interest is not confined to formal occasions of discussion between Muslims and Christians, but includes those informal interactions that occur wherever persons of the two faith communities are engaged together in workplaces, in residential neighborhoods, in education or in community activities.

This volume acknowledges that impetus given to interreligious dialogue by the Second Vatican Council. The booklet was first published in 1970 under the same title by the Secretariat for non-Christians, now known as the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. In 1981 the Council decided to revise the booklet in the light of experience and research in the intervening period. The author of the new edition, Fr. Maurice Borrmans, is Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies at the Pontifical Institute in Rome, with a specialization in the field of Islamic law. For twenty years he lived in North Africa, and subsequently traveled and lectured throughout the Islamic world, and also participated in various dialogue meetings. He and those with whom he has consulted in preparation of this edition have included reflections from a wide range of experiences.

This manual does not suggest there is only one pattern for Christian-Muslim conversations. Rather it offers an invitation to pilgrimage. "Dialogue is...a daring adventure engaged in by people desiring mutual enrichment from their different ways, fellowship in sharing common values and openness to whatever way the Lord might speak to them in the intimacy of their conscience. Certainly Christians and Muslims have divergent ideas as to what is involved in their meeting together. This is to be expected since they are different. This book will try to bring them together a little by helping the Christians to develop a spirit of dialogue marked with respect and love as well as with intelligence and understanding." (p.10)

"The purpose of the *Guidelines* is to provide a basic knowledge of Islamic beliefs and practices so that Christians may be better prepared to engage in dialogue with Muslims. Other

essential aspects are also studied: the ideas of Muslims about Christianity and Christians, the possibilities of theological convergence, and areas of possible collaboration." (p. 5.) Within the limitations of brevity and perspective the book accomplishes its purpose, and serves as a valuable resource for persons concerned with Muslim-Christian dialogue, as well as three-way interaction between Christians, Muslims and Jews.

The author's discussion moves through six chapters, beginning with the diversity of Christians and Muslims who engage each other on two levels: human encounter and the fellowship of believers (p.11). This leads to three assumptions: (1) Partners in dialogue share a common humanity that draws them into either discussion or confrontation in a world that is increasingly interdependent. (2) Christians, Muslims and Jews share a common Abrahamic faith tradition, though each understands it differently. (3) Christian and Muslim participants must diligently and patiently seek to overcome preconceptions in order to understand what others seek to communicate about their own faith tradition and values arising from them. Christians should focus on those essential points of Muslims' faith...which will evoke the most immediate respect and which Christians will most easily be able to interpret according to the spirit of their own faith." (p. 45) Conversely Muslims will need to do the same regarding Christians. This is but one strategy to avoid "present obstacles" to fruitful dialogue (chapter 4).

Cooperation among Muslims, Christians and Jews requires concrete response to forces that oppress human existence. As monotheists they can find common ground on the basis of four shared theological themes: fulfillment of creation, service to humankind, promotion of human dignity in the organization of society and human imitation of divine action.

Christians and Muslims share "potential areas of religious agreement," namely the divine mystery, the gift of the revealed Word, the role of prophets, the support of faith communities, the secrets of prayer, and exploring the ways of holiness that look beyond death to hope in God alone.

In conclusion, the *Guidelines* suggests mutual sharing on four levels of communication (p. 14): dialogue of hearts (in devotion and piety), dialogue of life (promotion of human values), dialogue of speech ("daring to discourse on both God and humankind") and dialogue of silence (meditating on "what God speaks directly to the heart of each of the partners.")

The brevity of this volume does not permit extensive probing of any single sub-topic. But it does offer creative and suggestive ways to approach Christian-Muslim interchange while maintaining the integrity of one's own faith and community.

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Between Qur'an and Crown: The Challenge of Political Legitimacy in the Arab World. By Tamara Sonn. Boulder: Westview Press, 1990. xiii plus 266 pp. n.p.

In the wake of the western media's recent ballyhoo over the demise of pan-Arab nationalism, the theme of an Arab world in disarray was bound to find its way to the pages of academic publications. Indeed, the one conclusion which western commentators enunciated during the Persian Gulf War was the spectacular unraveling of Arab political ties. This new perspective on the condition of the Arab world is perfectly justifiable, although a more sober reflection on the implications of US intervention in a regional Arab conflict should also have elicited equally as pessimistic an assessment.

Tamara Sonn's work attempts to explain the failure of both pan-Islamic and pan-Arab ideologies in the light of the Arabs' recent international disasters. Her book is an ambitious and sweeping review of Arab history from the dawn of Islam until the present in an effort to explain what she perceives as the chronic fixation of Arabs and Muslims on the notion of a supra state. Using standard but pivotal references ranging from the early works of Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn al-Jawzi to such current authorities such as George Antonius and Albert Hourani, Sonn presents a persistent argument. The theme of her book is that the major weakness of Arab political systems was always the

absence of a decisive effort to separate religious from political authority. When the last of the Islamic supra states, the Ottoman Empire, was finally dismembered, the Arabs refused to acknowledge this reality. Theoretical schemes proposing either the recreation of Islamic political unity or the erection of a strong pan-Arab state alternated in the writings of eminent thinkers. Finally, the great Arab defeat of 1967 dealt the death blow to pan-Arabist forces, thereby creating a vacuum which was duly filled by the new Islamist groups.

Sonn's thesis, delivered in homiletic tones, views the entire Arab historical experience through the prism of modern western state development. Viewed as such, the Arab experience is bound to appear distorted, particularly when measured against the ideal development of modern western nationalisms. Since the new nations of Europe developed from the splintering of the Holy Roman Empire and managed to create stable and viable territorial entities, then the only route open to the new states carved from the Ottoman Empire was to accept reality and build strong, individual states.

What strengthened these new European nations, according to Sonn, was the replacement of religious legitimacy vested in ecclesiastical rulers with secular legitimacy vested in the government. This paved the way to progressive development and stable borders. Since the sole purpose of creating the first Islamic empire was to spread the message of Islam, she states, then there is no reason today to cling to this outmoded structure. She also marshals historical evidence fortifying her view that decentralizing pressures within the Islamic world set in as early as the end of the Umayyid period. Thus, Ibn Taymiyya responded in the fourteenth century to the emergence of several loci of authority and power in the Muslim world by calling on each of the believers to uphold Islamic ideals and contribute individually to the augmentation of Islamic morality.

Echoing some of Bassam Tibi's earlier criticism of Arab nationalism (in his *Arab Nationalism. A Critical Inquiry*), Sonn proceeds to catalog the flawed and impractical ideas of major modern Arab and Islamic thinkers, such as Afghani, Rashid Rida, Ṣaṭī' al-Husri, and Hasan al-Banna. Sonn, for instance, believes that Afghani's call for unity among Muslims had as its goal not political, but social unity. She also interprets Rashid Ridha's call for Islamic cooperation as a gesture devoid of any emphasis on a single Islamic unit. Lutfi al-Sayyid's known advocacy of secular Egyptian nationalism, on the other hand, is presented as embodying a great deal of support for a non-sectarian religion. Her assessment of al-Banna's thought is that he, more than anyone else, began the trend of opting for Islamic solutions, including a pan-Islamic state, as a response to western imperialist encroachment. Although her description of the current, more radicalized Jihad groups in Egypt is accurate, she fails to see much distinction between their attitude towards Arab nationalism and that of the earlier Muslim Brotherhood.

Sonn's reading of Nasser's pan-Arabism is also unflattering, making his first priority to be the establishment of Egypt as the center of the Arab world. She reasserts the notion, commonly held by detractors of Arab nationalism, that the Arabs' vehement endorsement of the Palestinian cause was mostly to deflect attention from problems at home. Finally, she offers the example of Saudi Arabia as a successful case of the integration of religious legitimacy with tribal and national identity. She argues that no one can dispute the presence and survival of a genuine Islamic value system in Saudi Arabia.

In summary, Sonn uses the inductive method of analysis to buttress a fully formed thesis. Her conclusion, however, fails to convince. A thesis of these sweeping dimensions and which traces a single thread to the earliest states of Islamic history, namely a flawed Arab intellectual predilection towards rhetorical solutions and a retreat away from reality, cannot be easily proven. Sonn achieves a certain credibility by simply supplying innovative analysis which either goes counter to expert views or simply leaves out relevant aspects of her subjects' ideas. Ibn Taymiyya, for instance, did not de-emphasize allegiance to central authority because he rejected the idea of a supra state, but because of his abhorrence of the new Tartar rulers of the Muslim world. Rashid Rida, though a transitional figure straddling the pan-Islamic and secular-nationalist eras and an advocate of a re-structured Caliphate, did add a modern twist to the notion of a supra Islamic state. Sonn does not mention Rida's advocacy of a spiritual Caliphate akin to the Papacy in order to supervise the religious affairs of the believers. Neither does she credit Rida's generation with seeking an alternative to Ottomanism and western credit, she has supported this argument with a massive and impressive array of historical data and credible analysis. But the book remains throughout just that, an elabo-

rate argument. It is not the sort of book that one can dismiss easily, especially since it came about at a time when the forces of pan-Arabism appear to be in a state of total dysfunction.

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SHORTER NOTICES

Philosophy: A Critique. By Syed Zafarul Hasan. Lahore: Institute of Islamic Culture, 1988. 272 pp.

In his publisher's note the Director of Institute of Islamic Culture in Lahore, Pakistan, Dr Seraj Munir says, "[t]he present philosophical treatise was produced at the midpoint of this century. It somehow vanished.... Last year was the year of its manifestation." The author, the late Syed Zafarul Hasan, a famous Muslim Indian philosopher, was well acquainted with classical and modern Western philosophy. In his long philosophical career, he endeavored to show how Western philosophy had some bearing on the intellectual situation of modern Islam. The book itself is concerned with epistemology—a branch of philosophy, and as such it can provide students of philosophy, especially Islamic philosophy, with a framework of reference, a method of analysis, and tool of philosophical probing.

The Concept of Knowledge in Islam and its Implications for Education in a Developing Country. By Wan Mod Nor Wan Daud. New York: Mansell, 1989. 144 pp. Selected bibliography. Index.

This book is an elaboration of a well-studied theme in classical and modern Islamic thought. The chapters range from the *Qur'an* and the Prophet Muḥammad to the Islamic Weltanschauung and the Educational Implications for Malaysia. Professor Daud, a research fellow at the Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization in the International Islamic University, is primarily concerned with setting up an "Islamic educational framework" to be based on the Islamic world-view, and which can be applied in such emerging Third World countries as Malaysia, Indonesia, and Pakistan.

Bulletin Critiques des Annales Islamiques, Number 5. Cairo: Institut Français D'Archeologie Orientale, 1988.

This Bulletin includes summaries of studies and book reviews in various aspects of Islamic studies, especially Language and Arabic literature; Islamic philosophy and theology; History and anthropology of the Middle East and Africa and Islamic art. It is a good introduction to the current debates in the French speaking world on Islam, Islamic religion and civilization.

Introduction to the Qur'an. By W. M. Watt and R. Bell. New York: Columbia University Press, 1990. Index. \$15.00.

Professor M. Watt's editing of this important work by the late Richard Bell is valuable to students of the *Qur'an* and Islamic studies. The basic arguments and the method of analysis adopted by the author are still intact. The themes of this book include the historical context of early Islam; Muḥammad's Prophetic experience; the history of the Qur'anic text; features of *Qur'anic* style; the shaping of the *Qur'an*; the doctrines of the *Qur'an*, and Islamic scholarship and the *Qur'an*.

Memoirs of Childhood and Youth in America. By Maryam Jameelah. Lahore: Muhammad Yusuf Khan and Sons, 1989. 223 pp.

This book contains the letters of the American Margaret Marcus before she converted to Islam in 1962 and adopted the name Maryam Jameelah. It basically tells the story of her upbringing in New York city and her search for what she calls the Truth, which she finally found in Pakistan after marrying a well-to-do Pakistani businessman.

Assassination of Light: Modern Saudi Short Stories. Collected and Translated by Abu Bakr Bagader and Ava Molnar Heinrichsdorff. Washington, D. C.: Three Continents Press, 1990. 83 pp. \$10.00.

This is a welcome addition to the growing list of literary works that deal with the modern and contemporary Arab world. It is a collection of short stories that portray daily life in Saudi Arabia and feature the pleasure and agony of a society in transition. Classical Islamic literary influences are clear in some of these short stories, while others are influenced by modernist themes and methods.

Dimona: The Third Temple? The Story Behind the Vanunu Revelation. By Mark Gaffney. Brattleboro: Amana Books, 1989. 236 pp. \$12.50.

Any one familiar with the Vanunu case will find this book both enlightening and saddening. It tells the ugly truth about the Arab/Israeli debacle. The author concludes that a radical peaceful solution to the Arab/Israeli conflict is more urgent than ever.

Palestinian Universities Under Occupation. Special Issue of Cairo Papers in Social Science, 11(2), Summer 1988. Cairo: AUC Press, 1988. 133 pp.

This is a highly recommended study of four Palestinian universities, which were closed down for a number of years by the Israeli military authorities since the beginning of the Uprising in December 1987: Birzeit University, al-Najah University, Bethlehem University, and Gaza Islamic University. The main goal of the monograph is to prove that Palestinian higher education, in spite of the daily political harassment and financial difficulties, is legitimate and serious. And that any research effort in these academic institutions must tackle the main concerns and problems of Palestinian society.

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SURVEY OF PERIODICALS

- I. General and Miscellaneous. Manuscripts, libraries. History of Islamic Studies.
- II. Pre-Islamic Arabia. Muammad. The Qur'an. *Hadith*.
- III. Religious Instruction. The Mosque. Religious Duties and Devotional Life. Ethics and Customs. Attitudes towards magic, etc. Sociology of Islam.
- IV. Theology. Movements, sects; Shī'a. Philosophy. Sciences.
- V. Sufism. Sufi orders. Saints.
- VI. Law. Politics; state; government. Nationalism. Socialism. Economics.

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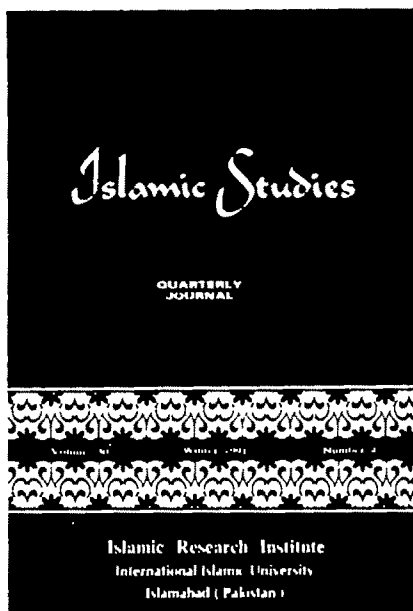
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Islamic Studies

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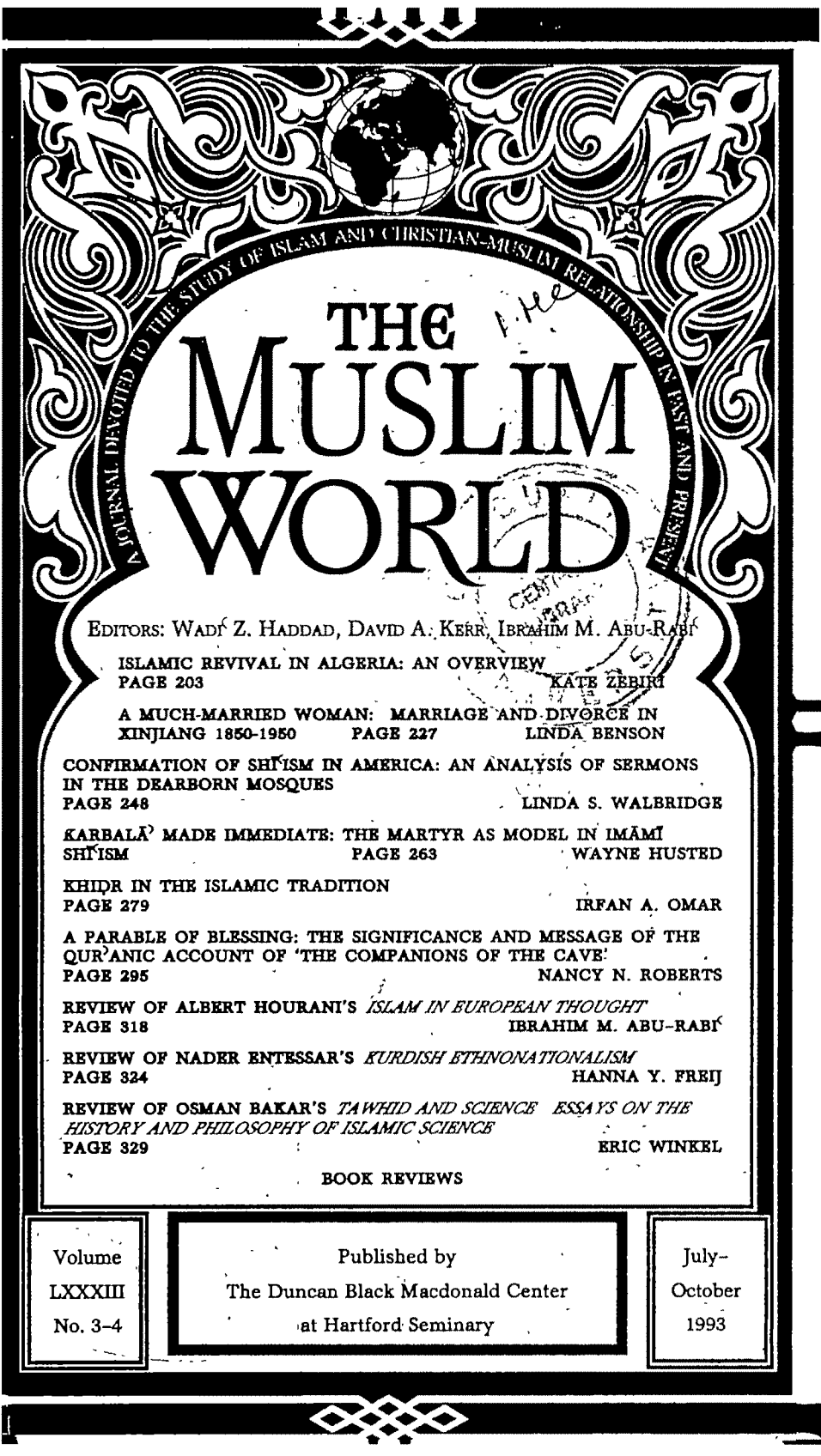
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ISLAMIC REVIVAL IN ALGERIA: AN OVERVIEW

Many Algerians would agree that the country is currently witnessing a "*ṣaḥwa*," or Islamic "awakening," in common with many other Muslim nations, and indeed there is overwhelming evidence of a general increase in religious observance, awareness and activity. This article aims to draw attention to some of the complexity and diversity of this multifaceted phenomenon by looking at the various indices of heightened Islamic activity and consciousness in Algeria and exploring the forms, discourse, and ideology of some of the vehicles and mediators of the *ṣaḥwa*: state-sponsored institutions and propaganda, Islamic political parties, and the new Islamic University of Constantine.

As recently as 1987 it could be suggested that "in Algeria, it is language and culture, much more than religion...which form the strongest basis for efforts to define a sphere of activity and of thought beyond the direct control of the state."¹ Until then serious social scientific research in Algeria was made virtually impossible by the close state supervision of any organized activity. One of the effects of the introduction of the multi-party system in the February 1989 Constitution was to open up the situation to a considerable degree, and to make possible the publication of books on the Algerian Islamist movement in both Algeria and France.²

The masses who took to the streets of Algerian cities in October 1988 included not only Islamists but workers, students, secularists, leftists, feminists and Berberists, all demonstrating their disillusionment with the FLN (National Liberation Front). But it was the Islamists, specifically the FIS (Islamic Salvation Front), who were subsequently able to organize themselves and attract the largest constituency. Following the overwhelming FIS victory at the polls in the first round of voting in the National Assembly elections of December 1991, commentators have sought an explanation of Algeria's social, political and economic problems. Some of the statistics are striking: while 75% of the population is under 30, there is 20% unemployment (48% between the ages of 16 and 24). With a growth rate of over 3%, the population more than doubled

¹ Allan Christelow, "Ritual, Culture and Politics of Islamic Reformism in Algeria," *Middle Eastern Studies* 23 (1987), p. 269

² Titles published recently in Algeria include Ahmed Rouadjia, *Les frères et la mosquée*; Aïssa Khelladi, *Les Islamistes Algériens face au pouvoir*; Ahmida Aïyeshi, *Al-Islāmiyyūn al-jawā'iriyūn bayna al-Sulta wa'l-Rasās*; Fawzi Oussedik ibn al-Hāshimī, *Al-Harakat al-Islāmiyya bi'l-Jazā'ir, 1962-1988*; idem., *Al-Shaykh Maḥfūz Nahnāh mawqāf fi'l-da'wa wa'l-haraka*; and Kamel Hamdi, *Leaders Islamiques: différents ou différends?* Al-Hāshimī and Hamdi are sympathetic to the Islamists, while the others are left-wing journalists. Titles recently published in France include M. Al-Ahnaf, B. Botiveau and F. Frégosi, *L'Algérie par ses islamistes*; and A. Lamchichi, *L'islamisme en Algérie*.

between independence and 1990, when it was estimated at 25 million. Thirty years of a corrupt and repressive régime left the country without any effective political infrastructure. The economic crisis (75% of GNP goes to service the massive foreign debt) is manifested in a chronic housing shortage, escalating food prices, and a plummeting dinar.³ The austerity measures necessitated by the fall in oil and gas revenues in the 1980s, and more recent steps towards economic liberalization, including the withdrawal of food subsidies, have caused increasing hardship. It is widely acknowledged that the educational system is in crisis. Apart from poor teaching standards and allegations of corruption, the system is designed to fail the vast majority—the pass-rate for the baccalaureate is kept deliberately low since successful candidates are guaranteed university entrance.⁴ There is a chronic lack of leisure facilities to provide an outlet for the frustrated energies of these masses of unemployed youth. It seems that the average Algerian school-leaver can hope for neither higher education, nor a job, nor housing, nor a fulfilling leisure life. With Boumediène's death in 1978, the sudden halt to his intensive developmental program and measures for national integration left a vacuum of which the Islamists were not slow to take advantage. Chadli Benjedid's more liberal policies gave them new opportunities, and from this point on they became increasingly vocal and organized. This may be said to represent the real beginning of Islamic revival in Algeria. Benjedid's promotion of the Arabization program actually created more problems than it solved by the uneven way in which it was implemented. Those who received an Arabic education were at a disadvantage in the labor market, and this gave rise to a discontented Arabicized class who went on to swell the ranks of the Islamists, calling for the complete Arabization of society. Furthermore the "co-operative" system, which involved importing teachers from the Middle East as well as sending Algerian students there, was responsible for the spread of Islamist ideas of mainly Muslim Brotherhood inspiration.⁵

In the 1970s and 1980s, in the absence of any tolerated political opposition, it was only the Islamist movement which was able to organize openly and with a relative lack of harassment.⁶ As in other Muslim countries, the government underestimated their potential appeal and found it convenient to have a counter-influence to the Marxist threat. Doubtless, there is truth in the assertion that the mosques provided a haven, above all a space, for those living in overcrowded and unwholesome conditions; in addition to the space,

³ The exchange rate against the pound sterling rose from 8 dinars in 1987 to almost 40 in 1992.

⁴ Ahmed Rouadjia gives the pass-rate as 16% for 1983, and states that the rate has been decreasing since then—*Les frères et la mosquée*, Algiers, 1991, p. 127.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

⁶ For a succinct account of the development of the Algerian Islamist movement, see Hugh Roberts's article, "Radical Islamism and the dilemma of Algerian nationalism: The embattled Arians of Algiers," *Third World Quarterly* Vol. 10, no. 2 (April 1988).

there was a potent, mobilizing, oppositional message which provided a vocabulary and an ideology with which to oppose the régime responsible for all their ills.

The growing manifestations of the *sahwa* are far from dependent on or confined to the FIS. That the FIS was able to capitalize on its radicalism and populism to gain a victory at the polls should not obscure the diversity of Algerian Islamism. In addition to the dramatic rise in Islamic activity in the form of political parties, associations, newspapers and publications made possible by political liberalization since 1989, one can discern a general rise in religious observance and awareness over the past few years. People who did not pray previously are now praying in increasing numbers, and mosque attendance is higher than ever. Even in remote Kabyle villages, the Friday sermon is broadcast by loudspeakers for the benefit of those (presumably women) who are unable to attend the service. Publicly, fasting in Ramaḍān appears to be universal. Food outlets are closed, and only in the relative privacy of the restaurants of the better hotels can foreigners indulge, and at the moment of breaking the fast there is an eerie silence in the normally packed and raucously noisy streets of Algiers. Although alcohol may be consumed in some of the more expensive restaurants and hotels, it is less freely available than previously, and less socially acceptable.

There has been a dramatic rise in mosque-building in the decades since independence,⁷ and prayer-rooms continue to mushroom everywhere—in the workplace, blocks of flats, lycées, hospitals and other institutions. The motives for initiating the building of a mosque may be religious, political (the desire to establish a place of worship independent of the state), social (e.g. to lend respectability to dubiously-acquired wealth), or mercenary (the desire to benefit from tax-exemptions when a mosque or prayer room forms part of a block of flats).⁸ However, the simple proliferation of mosques, regardless of the original motives for their foundation, ultimately gives rise to a net increase in religious observance and awareness.

There is a wide variety of Islamic publications available in bookshops and newsagents. All bookshops have a wide selection of Islamic titles, and one can also obtain popular Islamic works in sundry other shops and road stalls. Although printed in Algeria, the majority of books are by writers from the Middle East. As in other Arabic-speaking countries "Islamic heritage" works by classical authors such as Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, Ibn Taymiyya, al-Ghazālī, al-Nawawī and Ibn Sīrīn are freely available, and appear to find a ready audi-

⁷ Official figures are given as 2,000 mosques in 1962, 5,289 in 1980, and 11,221 in 1990, but the true figures are almost certainly considerably higher. See J. Landousies, "Chrétiens et Musulmans en Algérie," *Islamochristiana* 17 (1991), pp. 104-5.

⁸ Rouadja identifies four distinct categories of mosque: "popular," "free" (fundamentalists' initiative), "private" (entrepreneur's initiative), and "state"—see *Frères*, pp. 82 ff.

ence. Of contemporary authors, perhaps the most popular are the Egyptian scholars Muḥammad al-Ghazālī and Yūsuf al-Qaradāwī, two prolific authors and Azhar graduates who have both been active in Algeria in recent years. Also popular are books on the Muslim Brotherhood or by its members, particularly Ḥasan al-Bannā, Sayyid Qutb, Saʿīd Ḥawwā, and those of popular fundamentalist preachers such as the Shaykhs Kishk and Shaʿrāwī of Egypt. Prominent topics include polemical writings on the West and/or Christianity, and the inimitability (*iʿjāz*) of the Qurʾān in all its aspects—scientific, numerical, psychological, medical, etc. Incongruously, side by side with the works of strict iconoclasts, one finds material catering to the superstitious—the interpretation of dreams, and the use of the Qurʾān in curing illness. One can find in Arabic translation the works of some prominent non-Arab polemicists of the Islamic revival: Abuʾl Aʿla Mawdūdī, the South African Ahmed Deedāt, famed for his combative refutations of Christianity, and the testimony of Western converts to Islam, such as Muḥammad Asad and other lesser-known figures.

As in other Muslim countries, cassettes are an increasingly popular medium, and they have the added advantage that the message can reach even the illiterate. Recordings of Qurʾanic recitations and sermons, but especially the latter, are increasingly in demand, and they now represent a lucrative market. By this means, even women, who are normally unable to attend the mosque, can benefit from the exhortations of the preacher. The most popular preacher is Shaykh Kishk of Egypt, known for his outspoken denunciations of Western influence in Muslim countries, and, with the exception of the Algerian reformist Malek Bennabi (d. 1973), most of the speakers are from the Middle East or the Arabian Peninsula. These include Ahmad Qaṭṭān, Ḥasan Ayyūb, Saʿīd Ramaḍān al-Būti, Yūsuf al-Qaradāwī, Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, and ʿAbdallah ʿAlwān. Many of these lay stress on issues which are seen as dichotomizing Western and Islamic culture, such as sexual immorality.⁹

There are at least five weekly Islamic newspapers, all of recent provenance, the longest-running dating back to autumn 1990.¹⁰ As one would expect, international affairs involving Muslims and vigorous criticism of specific Western, especially American, policies are a prominent feature in all. There is some variation in opinion on social issues such as the status of Muslim women and democracy, the Francophone newspaper *L'Éveil* tending to take a more modernist line than the others, for example. However, notwithstanding the differences in outlook between and within the papers, it is possible to

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 178-9, and A. Khelladi, *Les islamistes algériens face au pouvoir*, Algiers, 1992, p. 144.

¹⁰ This is the government-affiliated *Al-ʿAqida* (The Creed). Other Islamic newspapers in circulation in the spring of 1992 were *Al-Nūr* (The Light), *Al-Ḥaqq* (The Truth), *Al-Nabaʿ* (The News—the official organ of Hamās), and *L'Éveil* (The Awakening), the only Francophone Islamic newspaper, as well as a new Islamic monthly, *Al-Tadammun* (Solidarity).

identify certain recurrent themes and areas of general consensus. There is unanimous condemnation of secularism, for example (but few attempts to define it), a strongly felt need to assert an Islamic/Algerian cultural identity (e.g. by drawing sharp distinctions between women in the West and Muslim women), an awareness of the phenomenon of "Orientalism" and of Western views of Islam generally, a tendency to entertain elaborate conspiracy theories relating to the protocols of the elders of Zion, a disproportionate concern with Christian evangelism in Algeria and Christian missionary activity internationally, and a good deal of indiscriminate and dogmatic anti-Westernism, as opposed to the well-directed criticisms on specific issues which are also to be found.¹¹ These are precisely the themes which are identified in a recent survey of international Islamic revivalist literature,¹² and are clearly related to the strong need for a sense of authenticity, human dignity and identity.

The Algerian *saḥwa* is of later inception than that of the Middle East, where the Arab defeat of 1967 is seen as a watershed, and some of the specific historical factors which account for this have already been referred to. Certain factors may be paralleled in other Muslim countries, such as the reaction against a supposedly "imported" ideology (in this case "socialism," albeit in its specifically Algerian form) which has not delivered the goods, and against a corrupt, autocratic government, and social anomie resulting from rapid modernization and urbanization. However, Algerian Islamists also have their own particular grievances. While charges of political corruption and repression are paramount, for example, the charge of collusion with the West is less in evidence, given the Algerian government's fairly respectable record of non-alignment.

Although there has been an element of foreign (mainly Saudi) funding of Algerian Islamism, allegations concerning the foreign connections (e.g. Afghani training) of the FIS and other Islamist groups, which are usually vigorously denied by these groups, are probably exaggerated by the régime and other opponents in order to discredit them. On the other hand, the Islamists are keen to stress their religious, political and moral solidarity with Muslims internationally, and actively promote links with Islamists abroad, and the ideological content of their writings is generally universalistic.¹³

¹¹ A survey of an annual international Islamic book fair at Ain el-Bey University in Constantine shows that a prominent place was given to books and magazines highlighting Western decadence Rouadjia, *Frères*, pp. 171-3.

¹² J. Esposito, Y. Haddad, and J. Voll, *The Contemporary Islamic Revival*, New York, 1991, Ch. 1.

¹³ However, Hugh Roberts has shown how the FIS, initially ambivalent towards Saddam Hussein in the Gulf conflict, finally opted for a pro-Iraqi stance in accordance with Algerian public opinion rather than keeping to a consistent Islamist position which would be naturally hostile to the secular Ba'athist régime "A trial of strength: Algerian Islamism," in J. Esposito (ed.), *Islamic Fundamentalisms and the Gulf Crisis* (The Fundamentalism Project, American Academy of Arts and Sciences), Chicago, 1991, pp. 140-44.

Official versus popular Islam

As in other Muslim countries, most notably in Egypt and Tunisia, the process of the nationalization of Islam by the State in Algeria began in earnest soon after independence in the context of national consolidation and integration. The Sufi brotherhoods and maraboutism, the main manifestations of popular Islam, had long been under attack by the reformist Islam of Ibn Bādīs and his followers,¹⁴ and Sufi *zāwīyas* have gradually been transformed into ordinary mosques and Qur'ān schools in the post-independence period. Early FLN policy aimed to absorb the reformist '*ulamā*' into its ranks, incorporating them into the civil service. At the same time a Ministry of Religious Affairs was established, and pious endowments (*awqāf*) were taken over by the government administration.

Both the 1963 "Code de la nationalité" and the 1976 National Charter made mention of Islam as an essential part of the Algerian character. The latter named Islam as the religion of the state, and even attributed victory over the colonialists to the peoples' adherence to Islam.¹⁵ However, there was never any attempt to integrate Islam with the affairs of state in any positive or organic way, and Islam was clearly subordinated to the ends of Algerian socialism: "in order to regenerate itself, the Muslim world has only one way out: to go beyond reformism and commit itself to the path of social revolution."¹⁶ Moreover the Charter spoke of women as having equal rights and duties with men.¹⁷

Between 1966 and 1971 the régime restricted and finally banned an Islamic association by the name of "*Al-Qiyam*," which called for an increased role for Islam in society.¹⁸ Having achieved its dissolution, the state proceeded to incorporate some of its ideas and rhetoric, particularly in the sphere of social morality.¹⁹ Measures taken under both the Boumediène and Chadli régimes, but especially the latter's, increased the Islamic profile of the government, and for a while may have successfully taken the initiative away from the Islamists: intensified mosque-construction, changes to the school curriculum to increase its religious content, the holding of international Islamic seminars, an increase in the proportion of religious programs on television,

¹⁴ For an account of this movement see Ali Merad, *Le réformisme musulman en Algérie de 1925 à 1940* (Paris, 1967).

¹⁵ Rouadjia, *Frères*, pp. 6-7.

¹⁶ Reported in Roberts, "Radical Islamism," p. 574.

¹⁷ B. Cheriet, "Islamism and Feminism," in J. Entelis and P. Naylor (eds.), *State and Society in Algeria*, Oxford, 1992, p. 210 n.9.

¹⁸ Founded soon after independence, this group was associated with the well-known Muslim reformist thinker, Malek Bennabi. It was intellectualist/gradualist rather than radical/activist.

¹⁹ Roberts, "Radical Islamism," pp. 564-65.

and the substitution of the Islamic week-end for the European one.²⁰ However, as in Sadāt's Egypt or Bhutto's Pakistan, attempts to play down the socialist rhetoric and bolster the régime's Islamic credentials only served to strengthen the Islamist movement by reinforcing the Islamic basis of Algerian identity.

The Algerian Family Code was first drafted in 1981, and after much debate and lobbying the final version was promulgated by the National Assembly in 1984. It is sometimes described as a compromise between conservatives and modernists.²¹ While there are small improvements for women in areas such as child custody, there have been objections from leftist, human rights and women's organizations to some of the traditional *Shari'ā* rulings which they see as contravening the provisions of the 1976 National Charter regarding equality of the sexes. The man's right to practice polygyny, inequality in divorce procedures, and the female's half-share of inheritance, for example, are confirmed. Furthermore, the woman, unless she is a widow or divorcee, cannot marry without the consent and presence of her guardian,²² and she is required to "obey her husband as head of the family, breastfeed his progeny, and show respect for his parents and kin."²³ A repudiated wife only has the right to accommodation if the husband is able to maintain a second dwelling, an extremely rare circumstance in contemporary Algeria. While the original 1981 draft provided for women's right to work with her husband's permission,²⁴ the 1984 Code's silence on the matter was regarded as a retrograde step by women's organizations.

Although a cynic might suggest that family law is a convenient area for governments to demonstrate their Islamic credentials without alienating broad sections of society, in the Algerian case the law appears to reflect genuine conservative sentiment within the National Assembly²⁵ and the society at large. Such is the Code's obvious dependence on the *Shari'ā* (although some might

²⁰ See K. Sutton, A. Aghrout and S. Zaimeche, "Political Changes in Algeria: an emerging electoral geography," *Maghreb Review* 17 (1992), p. 13, and M. Arkoun, "Algeria," in S. Hunter (ed.), *The Politics of Islamic Revivalism*, Indianapolis, 1988, p. 173.

²¹ The Code and reactions to it are described in P. Knauss, "Algerian Women since Independence," in J. Entelis and P. Naylor (eds.), *State and Society in Algeria*, pp. 162-6, B. Cheriet, "Islamism and Feminism," in *ibid.*, pp. 192-201, Rouadjia, *Frères*, pp. 219ff, and T. Melasuo, "Culture and minorities in the Arabo-Islamic identity of Algeria," in K. Ferdinand and M. Mozaffari (eds.), *Islam State and Society*, London, 1988, pp. 192-93.

²² One of the four Sunni schools of law, the Hanafi, allows a woman to contract her own marriage. Traditionally, Mālikī law prevails in North Africa, but a moderate Islamic reformist position could easily choose to adopt a different school if this was seen as desirable.

²³ B. Cheriet, "Islamism and Feminism," p. 195.

²⁴ P. Knauss, in "Algerian Women since Independence," p. 162, mentions a three-fold condition: in addition to the husband's permission the woman should have worked before marriage and have stipulated her intention to work in the marriage contract. This is puzzling, since the permission of the husband would surely obviate the necessity for a clause in the marriage contract.

²⁵ B. Cheriet, an Algerian lecturer in Education, mentions that some of the members of the National Assembly attempted to discuss the length of the stick with which disobedient wives should be beaten—"The Resilience of Algerian Populism," *Middle East Report*, Jan-Feb 1992, p. 14.

argue that to try to actually enforce by legislation such things as breastfeeding and respecting one's in-laws was "blameworthy innovation" [*bid'ā*]) that the Islamists have found little to criticize in it.

In the years since the introduction of multipartism, the Minister of Religious Affairs has asserted himself on several occasions. Since popular insurgency has centered on the mosques, with popular mosques outstripping the government mosques in construction and attendance, and worshippers refusing to pray behind government-authorized *imāms*, successive decrees have aimed to exert central control over mosque activities. These have been widely criticized both within and outside the Islamist movement.

In 1986 Abderrahmane Chibane, generally conciliatory towards the Islamists, was replaced as Minister of Religious Affairs by the more hard-line Boualem Baki. The latter promptly issued a circular to all authorities in the Constantine area (a main centre of Islamic activism) concerned with religious education, including mosque *imāms*. It expressed concern that mosque libraries and *ḥalaqas* (teaching circles) were being used in ways which aimed to "corrupt the spirit of adolescents," and urged people to oppose such "take-over" attempts and respect the sacred character of the mosque. Any "non-authorized" publications circulating in mosques should be confiscated, and the keys to mosque libraries should be in the hands of officially certified *imāms*. *Ḥalaqas* should not be specifically aimed at adolescents, and their subject-matter should be confined to traditional approved subjects, such as study of the Qur'ān and *Ḥadīth*.²⁶

A collection of decrees issued in March 1991 by Mouloud Hamrouche, then Minister of Religious Affairs, aimed to increase government control over the construction, functions, and personnel of mosques.²⁷ The decrees provide for the creation of an Inspectorate (*nizāra*) of Religious Affairs, and avowedly aim to preserve the sacred character of the mosque which is said to have been impugned by political rivalry. The text of these decrees states that mosques should not depend on any individual, group or association, but should be answerable only to the State. No matter who constructs a mosque, it constitutes a public endowment (*waqf*). Its spiritual, educational, cultural and pastoral functions are defined in some detail (Articles 18-24). Article 25 states that "any action contrary to the mission of the mosque or liable to injure its reputation is forbidden," and Article 26 bans "the use of mosques to attain illicit objectives" or for any personal gain or vested interest. Political sermons are permitted only if they are in the interests of the whole Algerian

²⁶ Rouadjia, *Freres*, pp. 195-6.

²⁷ The decrees are summarized in Landousies, "Chrétiens," pp. 105-7, and selections are reproduced in M. Al-Ahnaf, B. Botiveau, and F. Frégosi, *L'Algérie par ses islamistes*, Paris, 1991, pp. 107-11.

nation, and the Minister of Religious Affairs nominates *imāms* after obtaining the consent of "the believers" (Art. 12).

In a television interview in April 1992,²⁸ the current Minister of Religious Affairs, Sassi Lamouri, demonstrated his ability to use the Islamists' own weapons against them by quoting extensively from the Qur'ān, *Sunna*, and Islamic jurisprudence. The story of the "opposition mosque" (*masjid al-dīrār*), when a mosque outside Medina was used as a base by "hypocrites" (*munāfiqūn*) to stir up division among Muslims during the Prophet's lifetime, was used to discredit the Islamists' use of mosques as an oppositional base. They are accused of departing from the Prophet's *Sunna* and from religious etiquette (*adab*) by resorting to "abuse" (*shatm*) from the pulpit. With regard to the killings of Algerian policemen by Islamic activists, many texts on the sanctity of human life are quoted, including the *ḥadīth* which says that a Muslim who kills, or even tries to kill, a fellow Muslim will go to Hell, and the story of 'Usāma ibn Zayd, who was reproved by the Prophet for killing a man in a raid even though that man had, at the point of being killed, professed Islam by pronouncing the *shahāda*. Appeal is made to the traditional Islamic concept of the chain of authority, whereby authority is delegated to office-holders, including *imāms*, by the ruler, traditionally the Caliph but by extension the modern-day government. He concludes that it is invalid (*bātil*) to pray behind an *imām* who has not been appointed by the government. Finally, a supposed conversation between Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, an eminent authority in early Sunni Islam, and the rebel Kharijites is reported. In the light of their armed combat against the authorities, Ḥasan asked them whether the authorities prevented them from praying, fasting, paying the *zakāt* (alms tax) or going on pilgrimage. When they answered in the negative, he told them that they were fighting for the sake of worldly gain (*dunya*) rather than for God.

In an extended interview with the daily *"Al-Sha'b"*, the same Minister appeals to the universality of Islam: Islam is not a political party.²⁹ "Foreign elements" are blamed for the current situation in mosques, and the opposition is accused of trying to "turn a giant into a dwarf," and of using Islam as a tool to serve their own purposes. By contrast, he says that "Islam is not people's desires (*ahwā'*—a word used pejoratively in the Qur'ān to denote whims or selfish desires), nor the ambitions of some egoistic people." He refuses to allow the description of *"ṣaḥwa"* for the current Islamist activities (remarking that it could more appropriately be termed *"ghaḥwa"*—slumber), and maintains that "he who lights the fire of *fitna* (discord, civil war) inside the mosque is not to be counted among the people of the 'awakening'."

With varying degrees of success, the Minister fends off politically embarrassing questions about the number of "vacancies" in mosques (since the

²⁸ Broadcast on ENTV on 25th April 1992.

²⁹ Reported on 1st and 2nd April, 1992.

imāms have been arrested), the refusal of graduates of the Islamic University in Constantine to accept government posts as *imāms*, preferring instead to work voluntarily, peoples' refusal to pray behind government *imāms*, the government's past attempts to impose "standardized sermons," the dissolution of the Higher Islamic Council (*al-majlis al-islām al-a'lā*—a *fatwa*-issuing body which was independent of the Ministry), and the government's use of the Western-invented term "fundamentalism" (*uṣūliyya*) to describe the Islamists. He is forced to concede with regret that the people regard the government as a "foreign body," but vigorously defends the link between authority and Islamic institutions, maintaining that the government's role is merely to "protect" them, while they have complete freedom in issuing Islamic opinions and rulings.

As in many other Muslim countries, Islam has been given an increased profile in the official media. The sole Algerian television station features daily Qurʾān readings, "devotions" (*ibtihālāt*—a form of supplication often but not always associated with Sufism, and often accompanied by music, which may consist for example of chanting in praise of the Prophet), and the call to prayer at intervals throughout the day. Various programs throughout the week deal with particular religious themes, and during Ramaḍān religious broadcasting is extended to about three hours a day. Newspapers of all political hues increasingly have features relating to Islam or special pages in which religious figures answer people's queries.

The media is one of the most important arenas in which the battle of official versus popular Islam is being daily played out. It has often been observed that when régimes, nervous of Islamic opposition, seek to make use of Islam in the media, this turns out to be a double-edged sword, heightening religious consciousness generally, and thereby enhancing the popularity and credibility of that opposition. It is in any case doubtful how far government rhetoric is able to convince people in the light of current political realities, and it is likely that the emergence of a heterogeneous Islamic press will further undermine the government's claim to speak in the name of Islam.

Islamic political parties

Of the sixty or so political parties in existence at the time of writing, two (three before the dissolution of the FIS)—Hamās ("zeal," but also an Arabic acronym which stands for "the movement for an Islamic society") and Al-Nahḍa ("revival")—are explicitly Islamic parties,³⁰ while several others (e.g.

³⁰ Hamās is led by Mahfouz Nahnah, who has a strong following in the South around Blida, while Al-Nahḍa is led by Abdallah Djaballah, whose main support is in the East, around Constantine. Biographical details of these as well as the FIS leaders, Abbasi Madani and Ali Belhadj, can be found in A. Khelladi, *Les islamistes Algériens*, pp. 131-55.

Al-Umma, Jazā'irat al-Muslimat al-Mu'āsira, Hizb al-Tajdīd al-Jazā'iri) have a strong Islamic element in their programs.³¹ One should also mention in this connection that many Islamic "associations" have also sprung up, most prominent among them Al-Irshād wa'l-Islāh, Rābi'at al-Da'wa al-Islāmiyya, and Jam'iyyat al-Da'wa wa'l-Irshād. Although only the FIS has been able to gain widespread popular support, the other parties and associations have contributed to the heightening of religious awareness through social works, newspapers, and other publications. The fact that the only party able to oppose the government in a convincing manner was an Islamic party carried the Islamic revival into far corners of Algeria, even those areas such as the Kabylie (the Lesser Kabylie more than the Greater) which had previously been resistant to Islamic overtures. In the December 1991 elections the FIS managed to obtain the second largest vote in Lesser Kabylie, after Hocēin Ait Ahmed's Front for Socialist Forces (FFS), beating the Berberist Sa'īd Saadi's Assembly of Culture and Democracy (RCD) into third place.

Both Ḥamās and Al-Nahḍa³² attribute FIS's outstanding political success relative to their own to the FIS's seizing of the initiative by forming a party so promptly after the introduction of the July 1989 law which legalized political parties (the FIS had achieved recognition by September), thereby gaining the early co-operation and support of other Islamic activists (some of whom asked their followers to vote for FIS in the June 1990 municipal elections), as well as having sole access, for a considerable period of time, to the Islamic constituency.³³ There were insinuations about FIS's election campaign not being as "clean" as that of Al-Nahḍa and Ḥamās, but credit was given for their bold opposition to the government and for their social works, such as offering shelter to the homeless, setting up medical clinics in poor urban areas, and acting quickly to alleviate suffering following the Tipasa earthquake in November 1989. Their ultimate downfall (while not absolving the government), is partly attributed to their stubborn refusal to enter into any alliance with the other Islamic parties.

There is no detailed blueprint for an Islamic state extant in any of the parties' publications, but it is possible to discern significant differences in the programs, styles and Islamic standpoints of the three parties. While FIS and Al-Nahḍa are regarded as "fundamentalist," Ḥamās is seen as representing the moderate face of the Islamist movement in Algeria; on the other hand Al-Nahḍa, like Ḥamās, appeals to a more sophisticated audience than the more populist FIS. It is in any case extremely difficult to pin either of these parties

³¹ See Al-Ahnaf et al., *L'Algérie*, Annexe 1, for a list of some contemporary political parties and associations and brief descriptions of their programs.

³² The following information was gained through interviews conducted in April 1992 at the Algiers headquarters of Hamas and Al-Nahḍa.

³³ Both Al-Nahḍa and Ḥamās were officially founded in November 1990—H. Ayechi, *Al-Islāmiyyūn al-jazā'irīyūn bayna al-sultā wa'l-ra'sās*, Algiers, 1992, pp. 207 and 213.

down to a specific ideology, partly because of the fluid political situation, but also because of differences of opinion within them. There are various factions within the FIS, for example, and even within the leadership there is a marked contrast between the fiery outspokenness of Ali Belhadj and the more scholarly style of Abassi Madani, who holds a PhD in Education from London University.³⁴ While Belhadj is on record as saying that democracy is un-Islamic, thus raising questions about FIS's participation in the elections, Madani, more pragmatic, has never made such an explicit statement.

Al-Nahḍa's manifesto³⁵ bears the slogan, "An authentic society—by the Qurʾān; a strong state—by the sword; and a pioneering culture—by the pen." Among the formative principles listed are that Islam is a complete system (*nizām*), that the party strives to spread it as such, and that the "interests of Islam" are to be considered paramount over every other interest. The party would aim to achieve for Algeria independence from the "nations of unbelief" (*umam al-kufr*), and to establish a "free and just Islamic state," which would apply the rulings of Islam. The government would practice "*shūrā*" (consultation), God's law would be sovereign, and "the people" would exercise their authority within the bounds of the Shariʿa. It would be the responsibility of the State to "protect religion, establish its rulings and communicate it to the people."

In a brief section on economics, it is stated simply that *ribā* (which is interpreted as simple interest) would be banned in all its forms, as would monopoly, squandering and exploitation, and the collection and distribution of *zakāt* would be "organized." Although Al-Nahḍa has a record of left-wing economic views, it is stated that freedom of commerce would be encouraged, and there would be no interference in pricing except in cases of extreme necessity.

In the sphere of social morality the party would undertake to "spread virtuous morals and to defend them," and to be particularly concerned with women, their "education and direction (*tawjīh*), and protection from exploitation and vulgarity." It undertakes to put an end to prostitution, combat alcohol and drug-taking, and close clubs which promote such activities. It would work for the abolition of mixing of the sexes in education, administration, health services and other work-places and establishments. It would organize bathing resorts in order to "protect public morals and maintain public order."

In education it would wage war on the "intellectual invasion" (*al-ghazw al-fikrī*) in all its forms, and seek to make people aware of it. It would work to spread "Islamic culture" through education and the media. Religious duties

³⁴ Both were imprisoned following the "events" of June 1990, and both were sentenced to 12 years' imprisonment in July 1992. Abdelkader Hacheni took over as acting leader in their absence.

³⁵ Booklet entitled: "Harakat al-Nahdat al-Islāmiyya: mulhaq hawla ahammi 'anāwīn manāhīr al-islāh wa'l-taghyīr fi'l-barnāmij al-siyāsī," dated 15th April, 1991.

would be taught to all, and the curricula would be revised so as to "serve the creed, law (*shari'a*) and religious rites of the society." Memorization of the Qur'ān would be encouraged and considered an essential part of the curriculum, and Islamic and national history would both be taught.

Policy with regard to the media would be reformed in such a way as to "serve the public interest and not conflict with the general moral and behavioural standards (*adab*) of Islam." Men would be selected to work in the media on the basis of both ability and moral character, and advertizing would be subject to special scrutiny in the light of Islamic morals. Journalists would be encouraged to investigate and report the truth "within the limits of what propriety allows and public interest (*maslaḥa*) calls for," and technical ability would be channeled in order to "serve virtue."

The Islamic legal system would be progressively applied, and the judiciary would be independent of the executive. Judges would be selected on the basis of their knowledge and moral character.

This manifesto does not contain anything especially surprising from an Islamic point of view, but with its strongly authoritarian vision of the "Islamic state," in which the government plays a very active and interventionist role, and its emphasis on pious personalities in positions of trust, extreme vagueness on principles such as *shūrā*, it is strongly reminiscent of Abul A'la Mawdūdī's utopian vision of Islamic government.

The Ḥamās manifesto,³⁶ which was published in both Arabic and French, gives a rather different picture, notwithstanding the party slogan, "Islam is the solution." The preamble attributes the current crisis to the importing of foreign institutions in politics, the economy, and cultural and social life. Ḥamās claims that it (presumably in an earlier incarnation under Shaykh Nahnāh), was the first group in Algeria to reject the path of Westernization, in the mid-sixties, and among the first to call for an end to the one-party system. In what is perhaps a jibe at the FIS, it is stated that Ḥamās does not present itself as an "alternative" to society, since it is an organic part of that society, springing from its soil.

The most remarkable feature of this manifesto, however, is its consistent emphasis on pluralism. It states for example that "geographical, linguistic, political and doctrinal diversity (provided such can be accommodated within an Islamic framework) is a natural and healthy phenomenon which enriches life and stimulates society by means of *shūrā*, dialogue, honest competition, exchange of ideas and constructive criticism."

There is an emphasis on the need for renewal and *ijtihād* (independent juristic thinking) in Islamic thought. The latter should be practiced while relying on the Qur'ān and the *Sunna* and the precedents of the "pious forefathers"

³⁶ Booklet entitled "Barnāmij al-intikhāb āt al-tashrī'iyya," 1991.

(*al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*), but also being open to new achievements, scientific discoveries etc. A methodology should be evolved which "observes the law of change, and relies on gradualism, objectivity, realism, and the principle of "shurocracy."³⁷

Any constitution would be drawn up "in the light of Islam," and the aim would be to achieve an "Islamic system of government," based on *shūrā*, equality, freedom, and justice. Individual and public liberties—of conscience, thought, expression, publication, association, etc.—would be guaranteed "provided that these liberties are not exploited in order to destroy the bases of society, to conspire against the *umma* (nation/Islamic community) or to spread immorality among its members." The party would work towards the progressive application of the Shari'ā, gradually annulling those laws which contradicted its letter or spirit.

The provisions for economic development are more detailed than those in the Al-Nahḍa manifesto, covering such issues as agriculture, the hydraulic sector, transport, communications, mines, hydrocarbons, distribution, foreign debt, etc. There is little explicit reference to Islam on economic issues; *riba* and *zakāt* are not directly mentioned, although it is stated that savings institutions will be founded and the taxation system revised "in the light of the Shari'ā."

One of the aims of education would be to "build an Islamic personality" and to "form a good citizen in harmony with his society and its values." While the Arabization process would be continued in order to cover technical subjects, there would be an openness to the teaching of foreign languages.

In the special section on women, aims include liberating them from "out-moded customs" which have no link with Islam, such as the practice of depriving them of their inheritance,³⁸ the revision of laws which "prejudice the rights of women," and increasing female participation in public life—social, political and economic. Women's sport would be encouraged, but in a manner which is "far from the Western conception, and within the framework of higher values." She would be academically and culturally equipped "in accordance with her nature," and encouraged to accomplish her role and mission "at the side of man."

Among measures to help young people there would be an attempt to improve leisure facilities by establishing cultural centres, theatres and cinemas. Creativity and initiative would be encouraged in all spheres, without "demagoguery" (another jibe at the FIS?). Furthermore, popular culture would be

³⁷ "Shūrāqrāṭiyya" is a neologism coined by Nahnāh, but beyond being an Islamization of the word "democracy" does not seem to have any significant doctrinal content.

³⁸ Shaykh Nahnāh also mentioned in this connection preventing widows from re-marrying, limiting females' access to education, and observing strict dress rules even in the presence of close relatives—personal interview, 22/4/92, Algiers.

encouraged, and considered as part of the Algerian character. There would be a special concern with Berber history, culture and language, and an openness to other cultures, special mention being made of "African culture."

The media would help to "spread Islam to the furthest regions," and create virtuous citizens, and the armed forces would be educated in order to "spread the spirit of *jihād* and sacrifice in its members." Islam would be "relied on as the source of foreign policy," where there would be an emphasis on pan-Islamic links in the context of non-alignment, support for the "oppressed" (*al-mustaḍʿafin*—a Qurʾānic term), and for the Palestinian cause.

The above reviews are selective, concentrating on the specifically Islamic content of the manifestos, which is often more rhetorical than substantive. It goes without saying that both documents talk (albeit in rather generalized terms) about such things as the need to end corruption, boost agriculture and give special help to rural areas, improve the education system and health services, and increase employment. On balance the Ḥamās manifesto shows a greater concern for practical affairs (there are specific sections on topics such as the environment, scientific research, employment, health, housing and literacy, which are mentioned only in passing if at all in Al-Nahḍa's manifesto), less hackneyed use of Islamic terms, a less authoritarian vision of the state and correspondingly greater tolerance and openness to cultural and political pluralism and dialogue.

Some remarks made by Shaykh Nahnāh in a recorded interview with this writer will serve as a postscript to the manifesto. He insisted that "Islam" must be freely chosen by the people, who would always be able to vote for a non-Islamic party in future. He envisaged that it would take at least 25 years to attain an "Islamic state," and that a new international order was a prerequisite for this. He regretted that the Islamists had not been able to unite in a single political party, with different trends being represented in a free exchange of views. He expressed modernist views with regard to legislation, stressing the importance of flexibility in different circumstances, and of observing underlying intentions rather than rigid external rules. On the question of the segregation of the sexes, he felt that this was not something to be imposed from above, but that it should be left to the people to make their own decision. He did not feel that polygyny should be banned, although he acknowledged the importance of imposing certain conditions.

I have not had access to an actual election manifesto of the FIS, but various FIS texts have been collected on topics such as economics, politics, education, and women and the family.³⁹ While there is an official economic program,⁴⁰ most of the texts are taken from the party newspaper, *Al-Munqidh*.

³⁹ See Al-Ahnaf et al., *L'Algérie*, which also contains texts by other Algerian Islamists.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 179-87. See also A. Lamchichi, *L'islamisme en Algérie*. Paris, 1992, pp. 213-21, for a version of the FIS program addressed primarily to Algerian emigrants to France, which concentrates on economic issues.

The output of the FIS is on the whole more ambiguous and contradictory than that of the other parties. Their economic program, although more detailed than anything contained in the Ḥamās and Al-Nahḍa manifestos, talks simultaneously about the protection of private property and enterprise, redistribution of land to "those who are most deserving according to the precepts of the Shari'ā,"⁴¹ the encouragement of competition and limits on state intervention in industry,⁴² the "far-reaching prerogatives" of the state as regards rights of ownership and the economy,⁴³ and ends by describing this as a mixed economy which is "neither capitalist nor socialist."⁴⁴

The usual shibboleths of Algerian politics are in evidence: the restoration of the value of the Algerian currency, encouragement of self-sufficiency, reduction of unemployment, elimination of corruption, restoration of the dignity and rights of the Algerian worker, etc. The program is vague on many particulars: the debt question will be "re-examined,"⁴⁵ fiscal and customs policy will be "revised," the banking system will be "re-organized," etc.⁴⁶ Some statements are hopelessly utopian. For example, it is stated that Islam obliges the state to ensure the means of subsistence to all members of Muslim society, and that therefore the State should offer suitable employment to all, "but if the State is going through an exceptional phase when it cannot offer employment to all, then it enters into a second phase in which the State puts into operation the phase of solidarity."⁴⁷

There is reference to the Shari'ā throughout, though often in a way which begs the question: commercial operations and contracts etc. are to be organized "according to the principles of the Shari'ā,"⁴⁸ and the "principles of *shara'*" are to be implemented in decision-making in industrial units.⁴⁹ *Ribā*, monopolies, middlemen and fraud are to be abolished, an Islamic banking system is to be instituted, and *zakāt* and *waqfs* are to be considered as resources of the state, "so long as it respects the Shari'ā."⁵⁰

In political thought, the principle of *shūrā* is confirmed (although not defined) while "democracy" as such is usually rejected. While the principle of some kind of political pluralism must needs be conceded, Ali Belhadj is quoted as saying that "all parties which are opposed to the Islamic solution are par-

⁴¹ Lamchichi, *L'Islamisme*, p. 216.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 217, and Al-Ahnaf et al., *L'Algérie*, p. 183.

⁴³ Lamchichi, *L'Islamisme*, p. 219.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 220.

⁴⁵ Al-Ahnaf et al., *L'Algérie*, p. 185.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 186.

⁴⁷ Lamchichi, *L'Algérie*, pp. 218-9. It goes on to say that solidarity is a religious obligation for Muslims, and "the role of the State here is to force all its subjects to conform to this legal obligation".

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 217, and Al-Ahnaf et al., *L'Algérie*, pp. 183-4

⁴⁹ Lamchichi, *L'Islamisme*, p. 216.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 218, and Al-Ahnaf et al., *L'Algérie*, p. 186

ties of the devil."⁵¹ Secularism is regarded as heresy, and a communist is to be considered an apostate.⁵² Such statements are often seen as implying that under a FIS government, at best only "Islamic" parties would be allowed to operate.

Ali Belhadj refutes democracy at some length on both theoretical and practical grounds, a major objection being that it gives sovereignty to the people instead of to God, and that it necessarily entails secularism.⁵³ He maintains that the idea of "freedom" has been responsible for many ills, and has encouraged people to oppose authority. Moreover, in an Islamic context it is an inappropriate word; there can be no freedom of belief (the *ḥadīth* "Whoever changes his religion, kill him" is quoted), nor freedom of expression (blasphemy or "challenging religion" are prohibited). Democracy is said to condone "absolute freedom," which leads to anarchy and decadence and is incompatible with submission to God.⁵⁴

As in economics, where Islam is portrayed as a "middle way" between socialism and capitalism, so here *shūra* steps into the breach to demonstrate that an Islamic government would be neither anarchically liberal nor oppressively tyrannical. There is no precise delineation of the operation of *shūra* or the method by which abuse of power is to be avoided; instead one finds paradoxical statements such as: "it (Islam) obliges the State to vigorously combat corruption, oppression and tyranny on the part of those who exercise power and who are charged with authority."⁵⁵

Little is said on specific Islamic legislation, although Ali Belhadj refers to the Islamic ideal that the *ḥudūd* (Qur'anic prescribed punishments) are to be implemented "publicly and without pity" in the case of illicit sexual relations or alcohol consumption.⁵⁶ While the judiciary is in theory to be independent of the executive, this appears to be contradicted by the statement that it is the "Caliph's" duty to ensure justice and organize its implementation.⁵⁷

It is on social and cultural issues that the FIS has drawn the most severe criticism. Many have been alarmed not just at the lawless actions of individual FIS members acting on their own initiative, but at the actions of some of the FIS municipal authorities which presided over more than 50% of Algerian local councils between the June 1990 elections and the banning of the

⁵¹ Khelladi, *Les islamistes algériens*, p. 108.

⁵² Al-Ahnaf et al., *L'Algérie*, pp. 100-103. Al-Nahda appears to hold the same view of communism—a *fatwā* in their party newspaper holds that a Muslim woman may not marry a communist since he is considered an apostate; if they are already married, the marriage should be annulled—*ibid.*, p. 114-5.

⁵³ See *ibid.*, pp. 87-98 (President Chadli is castigated for declaring that the Algerian people are sovereign—p. 92).

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 90. Freedom is furthermore described as "a masonic formula designed to corrupt the world"—p. 89.

⁵⁵ Lamchichi, *L'Islamisme*, p. 219.

⁵⁶ Al-Ahnaf et al., *L'Algérie*, p. 90.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 83-4.

FIS in March 1992. Instances which are commonly cited include the closure of cinemas, the cancellation of musical concerts, the "cleaning up" of beaches, and the requirement of a medical "certificate of virginity" for females before agreeing to perform marriage services.

Al-Munqidh is hostile to the Berberist movement; cultural plurality and Arabization are the frequent subjects of articles in this connection. The FFS and the RCD are depicted as parties working for the interests of France, the latter being given the nickname "*Hizb Faransā*" (the Party of France). Those who claim to be defending the Berber language are said to have an ulterior motive; since they do not even have a proper written language, they will eventually acknowledge the unsuitability of the Berber language and call for the restoration of French.⁵⁸ Linguistic and cultural pluralism serves the ends of the imperialists by dividing the Algerian nation,⁵⁹ and one writer asks whether the Algerians have sunk so low in their thinking that "everyone who grabs a tabla and bangs on it, causing a racket, is called 'cultured,' and the racket he makes is called 'culture'."⁶⁰ Following demonstrations against the Arabization law of December 1990 aiming to phase in complete Arabization by 1997, a headline proclaims that "whoever demonstrates against the Arabic language is against Islam."⁶¹ Far from being a simple means of communication, the use of the French language constitutes a "veritable ideology," and if maintained will permit French hegemony over Algeria.⁶²

The question of the social role of Muslim women is often addressed, and their Islamic rights are enumerated (e.g. consent to marriage, ownership of property, the right to "good treatment" from the husband). Algerian women are asked to learn a lesson from the lamentable state of perdition of women in the West, and not to be deceived by the "glitter of false liberty and illusory rights for which some women's organizations are calling." While those organizations hold out a promise of equality with man, they are in fact working to make her "an easy victim for human wolves."⁶³ One prominent contributor states that women have the right to do paid work which is "compatible with their physiological constitution and in the framework of Islamic morality," but this should be only "when constrained by necessity."⁶⁴

⁵⁸ *Al-Munqidh*, no. 40 (2/1/91), p. 14.

⁵⁹ *Al-Munqidh*, no. 26 (20/9/90), p. 14.

⁶⁰ *Al-Munqidh*, no. 40 (2/1/91), p. 3.

⁶¹ *Al-Munqidh*, no. 40 (2/1/91) p. 1. Some 500, 000 people, Berbers and the Western-educated elite being well-represented among them, took to the streets of Algiers in protest—*Europe Year Book. The Middle East and North Africa*, 1992, p. 312.

⁶² *Al-Munqidh*, no. 40 (2/1/91), p. 14.

⁶³ *Al-Munqidh*, no. 21 (undated), p. 12. In a more outspoken article, the idea of equality of the sexes is described as an international Zionist/Crusader conspiracy—Al-Ahnaf et al., *L'Algérie*, pp. 243-5.

⁶⁴ Al-Ahnaf et al., *L'Algérie*, p. 252—comment by Mokhtar Aniba.

On the question of mixing of the sexes, the same contributor says, "If by 'mixing' one means that women and men can meet each other and intermingle, we doubt that a man (or a woman) endowed with one iota of sense could accept such a heinous thing."⁶⁵ Ali Belhadj comments that a women who goes out lightly dressed or wearing make-up "exposes herself to punishment."⁶⁶

Many features of the FIS output resemble in style and content the rhetoric of Islamic activists such as Abu'l A'la Mawdūdi and Sayyid Qutb, key thinkers in the radicalization and politicization of Islamic thought. These include the unwillingness to compromise or co-exist with other schools of thought or political parties, the strongly idealistic vision of Islamic government, and the attempt to draw lines of demarcation between true believers and backsliders.

In the Algerian context, the paramount function of the Islamic political parties, and particularly the FIS, has been one of social and political protest, and this goes some way to explaining the absence of any coherent political program. The lack of any such program is a criticism commonly directed against Islamist movements, but apparently no-one is prepared to give them the opportunity to discredit themselves by actually exercising power gained through the ballot box.

The Emir Abdel Kader Islamic University

Algerian Islamists acknowledge the importance of the new Emir Abdel Kader University of Islamic Sciences in Constantine, founded in 1984.⁶⁷ Notwithstanding some grumblings about the government's extravagance in building such an opulent mosque-university, on the whole it is a focus of national pride for until now there has been nothing to rival the traditional Islamic universities of Qarawiyyīn and Zaytūna in neighboring Morocco and Tunisia. It caters for about 1,800 students, almost half of whom are women. In contrast to the Azhar, classes are mixed. Apart from the occasional chador, all female students wear the *ḥijāb* in its modern "*zayy shari*"⁶⁸ form: a generous headscarf in a dark or pastel shade, attached at the front. A small proportion of the male students come from abroad, mostly African countries. All are provided with grants which are adequate to cover living costs.

Although a large majority of the staff and students are now Algerian, the University is active in developing links with other Arabic and Islamic Universities, and has some contact with the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) in Virginia, which acts in a consultative capacity to the University.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 255.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

⁶⁷ Unless otherwise stated, information in this section was gained in interviews with the Principal, Vice-Principal and various lecturers held at the University in April 1992.

⁶⁸ Of the seventy or so teaching staff, approximately twenty are from other countries, including Iraq, Sudan, Tunisia, India, Chad, and Ethiopia.

Prominent thinkers all over the Muslim world, representing an intellectual élite of the Islamist movement, are connected with the IIIT, which aims to work towards an Islamic theoretical basis for the modern social sciences, or the "Islamization of knowledge."⁶⁹ It appears to be a rather unique concerted intellectual effort to bridge the divide between tradition and modernity for Muslims in the modern world, and to place Muslims back in the running as far as the modern sciences are concerned. Muslim scholars of international repute have been involved in the planning of the University.⁷⁰ Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, one of the foremost figures of the Islamic revival internationally, was Director of Academic Consultation from 1984 until his departure from Algeria in 1989. He was embraced by the national press and became one of the most prominent media personalities of that time, often making daily appearances on television.

Although the University was established by government initiative, this is not generally seen as detracting from its independence or integrity. Administratively it falls under the Ministry of Higher Education, but the Principal insists that they have complete academic independence. In any case, many Islamists in Algeria are willing to concede that the FLN has been responsible for some good actions, such as changing the weekly holiday from Sunday to Friday.

The University does not see itself as merely an inferior Algerian version of established traditional institutions such as the Azhar, but believes it has a unique role. The Principal identified this as "the combination of the old and the new." As in the Azhar, many of the senior staff members hold PhD's from Western universities, but this does not mean that they are "Westernized" as such. Rather, it is symptomatic of the recognition that there is a need for Muslims to be able to confront the intellectual challenges of the West on equal terms.

Graduates from this institution will almost certainly form a significant part of the leadership of the Islamist movement in Algeria in the near future. Therefore it is pertinent to look in some detail at the available courses. In the following description, course titles will be italicized, with further details, where relevant, in parentheses.⁷¹

The course of study leads to a degree in Islamic Sciences, and entry requirements are the baccalaureate or its equivalent. All students take a core course in the first year which covers traditional Islamic subjects such as

⁶⁹ For a definition of this concept see ʿImād al-Dīn Khalīl, "Islamization of Knowledge: a methodology," Occasional Paper No. 2, IIIT, London, 1991. One non-Muslim Islamicist, John Esposito, is on the editorial board of its periodical, the *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* Algerian Islamists generally appeared to be aware of the existence of the IIIT.

⁷⁰ The first page of the prospectus acknowledges the contributions of Muhammad al-Ghazālī, Yusuf al-Qaradāwī and Saʿīd Ramadan al-Būḥī.

⁷¹ The following information is from the University handbook, "Dallīl jāmiʿat al-Amīr ʿAbd al-Qādir lī-l-ʿulūm al-islāmiyya," 1991, and from individual course descriptions obtained from the University administration.

memorization and recitation of the Qur'ān, the sciences of the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*, *ʿaqīdā* (creed), *fiqh* (jurisprudence), *usūl al-fiqh* (the principles of jurisprudence), *sīrā* (biography of Muḥammad), Islamic history, and Arabic language. The study of English is compulsory for all students in all years of study. This may represent a deliberate departure from the Algerian Francophone tradition, which is in any case being phased out of the educational system, but the Principal gave a more specific reason—namely the fact that there are many important works on Islamic studies in English by both Western and Muslim scholars. After this, students enrol in one of the specialized institutes (of "*Shariʿa*," "*Daʿwa* (mission) and Theology," or "Islamic Civilization") and choose from a selection of programs for a further three-year period.

Apart from the traditional grounding described above, and the inclusion of certain areas of study that were phased out of traditional institutions of Islamic learning, such as Sufism, Greek and Islamic philosophy, and the Persian language, there is a strong emphasis on keeping the student abreast with contemporary developments. This is apparent from some of the course titles and their contents:

Modern Arab History

Modern World History

Modern Philosophical Schools (rationalism, existentialism, Marxism, materialism, positivism, and humanism)

Contemporary Ideologies (including the bases of contemporary Western civilization, secularism, nationalism, democracy, socialism, Zionism, pragmatism, the influence of all these on the Islamic world, and "the return to the Islamic alternative, in order to oppose ideological influences")

Contemporary Islamic Thought (including the thought of various modern Muslim thinkers such as ʿAbduh, Qutb, and Mawdūdī, as well as topics such as education, media, development and "Zionism from an Islamic point of view.")

Another prominent feature of some of the available courses is the influence of the concept of the Islamization of knowledge. Thus:

Sociology from an Islamic Viewpoint (the principles and characteristics of the "Islamic social system," the importing of ready-made social models as an issue affecting contemporary Islamic society, the characteristics of an Islamic sociology: its attitude to Western social theory, and the religious basis of sociological theory)

Sociology of Religion (taught from a specifically Islamic perspective)

Social Psychology (including "human nature according to the Qur'ān," "Sufi symbology," and "the difference between the sexes")

Islamic Banking

The Media from an Islamic Perspective ("the capitalist media," "the communist media," the mission, functions and characteristics of an Islamic media, and "the Islamic interpretation of events.")

The "Department of Creed and Comparative Religion" offers many courses which would presumably be of benefit to the Muslim *daʿī* (preacher). From the course descriptions it seems that although there is some attempt to provide accurate historical information on the formation and growth of other religions, and some factual information on their beliefs and practices, they are firmly accommodated into the Islamic scheme of things:

Christianity and its Sects (including "contradictions between the gospels and the epistles," "the Messiah in the gospels and the Qurʾān")

Judaism and its Sects (including "Judaism in the Qurʾān") *Christian Evangelism* (missionary institutions in the West and their activities in Muslim lands, the means they employ: social services, education, media, and conferences and exhibitions, the "role of the Church in encouraging the Crusades," imperialism and missionaries in the Islamic world, the "harvest" of missionaries' efforts in the Islamic world, the role of Muslim *duʿās* in counteracting Christian missionary activity)

European Imperialism and the Missionaries in Asia, Africa and America.

In addition to the above courses, at least two others are of interest in the Islam-and-the-West confrontation:

Orientalism (the ways in which it creates doubts about Islam as a divine religion, the prophethood of Muḥammad, the authenticity of the *Sunna*, etc., the "aims, both hidden and apparent" of certain eminent Orientalists, such as Goldziher, Margoliouth, Nicholson, and Watt, its connection with imperialism and missionary activity as well as its purely academic aspects, the "schools" of Orientalism: Jewish, Christian, communist, and secularist, critical methods of confronting the challenge of the "intellectual invasion," "Orientalists and the secret services (*mukhabarāt*)," "Orientalists and the *ṣaḥwa*," and "Orientalists in our [Muslim] countries.")

The History of the Crusades

Many of the above courses cater for students who specialize in Islamic *daʿwa*, and are therefore designed to equip them to engage in argumentation with ideological adversaries.

Other courses available, depending on the student's specialization, include classical and modern literature courses, law courses both Islamic and Western/international law, and a range of Islamic studies courses.

The above course details can only give a superficial impression of what is actually taught. Nevertheless, certain impressions emerge, and it seems clear that, as with the political rhetoric of Islamist parties and the content of the

Algerian Islamic press, there is a strong influence of international Islamism at the University. Since its graduates are expected to obtain employment in key positions, as *imāms*, secondary school teachers, journalists and lawyers, this must have implications for future trends in Islamic ideology in Algeria.

Concluding remarks

Algeria is in the throes of an identity crisis. While Algerians continue to suffer from the repercussions of the colonial experience, they struggle to maintain a balance between the potentially unifying factors of Islam and Arabism (which were so crucial to the independence movement), and tolerance of linguistic, cultural and political differences. There may be some justice, but little advantage, in attributing the present ills to the colonialists, who exploited divisions between Arab and Berber, or sought to "emancipate" women from their state of "repression." It is partly because of this that linguistic and gender issues are so divisive and continue to arouse bitter controversy, Berberists and women's organizations being accused by Islamists of serving neo-colonialist ends.

It emerges from the foregoing discussion that while the particular forms and functions of the vehicles of the *ṣaḥīḥa* arise from the Algerian context, the discourse and to a great extent the ideology is strongly influenced by international Islamism. An increase in output and quantity does not appear to be accompanied by a corresponding increase in the quality of the thought expressed, or any significant advance in the application of *ijtihād* to contemporary problems. In all fairness it must be said that in Algeria at least, the lack of indigenous Islamic educational institutions in the wake of the colonialist experience has made this virtually impossible, and it may be that the Emir Abdel Kader University will represent a significant advance in this respect. There is also a functional explanation: Islam as political discourse is by definition a reductionist, utilitarian, impoverished Islam. A superficial, univocal and sloganistic version of Islam can be easily manipulated to support a given point of view. In the words of Mohamed Arkoun, "The ruling élite and the Islamic movements agree on one special point: Islam should remain a stock of symbols, signs and signals at the disposal of the competing actors."⁷²

The construction of a demonology of secularism, feminism, Orientalism, Western decadence, Christian expansionism, etc., which can be projected onto an alien 'Other,' no doubt serves to reinforce one's own sense of identity. However, those who adhere to such a hermetically-sealed worldview, regardless of the element of truth contained therein, are in danger of remaining divorced from reality. Ironically the idea of the "comprehensiveness" of Islam,

⁷² M. Arkoun, "Algeria," p. 184.

enthusiastically adopted from the writings of the Muslim Brotherhood, functions as a rallying cry for the politicization, and ultimately the secularization, of Islamic thought. Whereas in the original Islamic teachings this comprehensiveness signalled the absorption of the profane into the sacred, this is now reversed so that the sacred becomes submerged in the profane. The process is accelerated by the intrusive pervasiveness of the modern media. In these circumstances Islam, the religion of Oneness (*tawḥīd*) and of submission to the Transcendent, is in danger of being transformed into its own antithesis: a conceptual idol to which all else is subjugated.

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A MUCH-MARRIED WOMAN: MARRIAGE & DIVORCE IN XINJIANG 1850-1950*

From the time of Herodotus onwards, Western travelers have contributed to legends of the fabled cities and peoples of Central Asia. Perhaps no inhabitants of this vast and remote region held more fascination for Westerners than the region's women, who have been portrayed as exotic, erotic creatures whose behavior as reported by intrepid—often highly imaginative—male explorers shocked the “civilized” peoples of the West. Story after story reinforced this image of the Asian woman so that it is not surprising to find in 19th and 20th century Western literature the phenomenon identified by Edward Said as “orientalism.”

This paper is partly an attempt to examine some of the Western lore which surrounds Turkestani women¹ and, in doing so, to discover the women behind the veil as individuals within the context of Turkestani society in the period 1850-1950. It is also a preliminary investigation into women's status, focusing on the institution of marriage and divorce.

Approaching this subject proved more difficult than anticipated, largely because of the nature of the sources. Few written records of this period focus on the role of women and the family and thus information must be gleaned from a wide variety of materials. Although the image conveyed is often shadowy, and largely from a male perspective, an image nonetheless emerges that serves as a starting point for investigation into this aspect of Xinjiang's social history.

Sources in Western languages located thus far consist of European travelers', missionaries' and diplomats' accounts, some of which, on first and even second reading, appear to contain quite fanciful, imaginative portrayals of Turkestani life, and of women in particular, in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Some clearly hark back to the long tradition of eroticizing the women of

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¹ The term “Turkestani” is used here to refer to Uygur, Uzbek, Kirghiz and Kazak people living in Xinjiang, now a part of the People's Republic of China. This usage concurs with that of Ira Lapidus, who uses this designation in his book *A History of Islamic Societies* (1989). Where materials refer specifically to one of the ethnic groups within the Turkestani people this is indicated in the text. The whole issue of ethnic/national identity of peoples in Xinjiang awaits a sort of international “zhengfeng” campaign. The older term seems more descriptive of the nature and composition of the Xinjiang population in the period under discussion and thus the usage has been adopted here.

the "East." Used with caution, these accounts nonetheless provide important clues to the reality of life on Xinjiang oases, as will be discussed below.

A second source consists of Chinese materials. A considerable number of Qing documents are devoted to Xinjiang, especially in the 19th century. While much of this concerns the region's potential as a source of natural wealth or its importance for the prestige and protection of the Qing empire's domains, scattered references deal with the local populations and their culture. For the early Republican period, materials are now available in several archives concerning the northwestern region, but these have, thus far, yielded fairly little information relevant to the institutions of marriage and divorce, as these affairs were apparently left largely in the hands of the local population. By the 1940s, the Nationalist government was finally able to exercise a degree of control in 7 of Xinjiang's 10 districts. One result was a census taken in 1946, the focus of which was the area's population, divided among the fourteen officially recognized "nations" in the region. Although the census extended to the number of cows, sheep, and horses in each of the region's districts, it did not include statistics on marriage, children, divorce, urban/rural populations or other demographic information. There is thus little available statistical data from the Republican period to help systematically document important aspects of local life. Since the early 1980s, a number of works related to Uygur history have been published in Xinjiang, including a 1984 collection of historical materials on the Uygurs and a history of the Uygur nationality published in 1991. While such works are of great interest, sections related to social history tend to be brief and thus far contribute only modestly to our understanding of the traditional view of such important institutions as marriage and the family.

A third source of information on traditional culture is contained in Turkic materials, including songs, proverbs, and epic poems or "*dastan*." Many of the latter portray women as important, even heroic figures, thereby indicating what traits were admirable in women and thus offering one measure of the status of women in traditional Uygur society. While these sources do not specifically address questions related to marriage and divorce, they do demonstrate the type of exemplar being offered to the oasis populations in the Xinjiang area down through the present day.



Of these sources, the European accounts have yielded the most detailed descriptions of marriage and divorce. While the image they create is from a 19th century male perspective, with all the limitations that view implies, these accounts nonetheless offer a starting point from which to explore, first, the status of Xinjiang's Turkestani women in general and, second, the institutions of marriage and divorce between 1850-1950.

European Perceptions, Local Realities

It was once suggested to me that an alternative explanation to men's constant wars, imperialist expansion and continued attempts at subjugating groups of their fellow human beings lay not in the urge for domination nor in man's desire for wealth and fame, but rather in the fact that the women of far distant places had such an enduring fascination that men went literally to the ends of the earth in search of them.

This assertion aside, it is clear that one outgrowth of man's desire for conquest and his travels to far distant lands was the romanticization of foreign females. Part of this process is the work of imagination and fantasy; the further removed from a man's known world, the more exotic the fantasy, the easier to imbue these foreign creatures with qualities reflective of man's less noble virtues; all manner of lascivious and seductive conduct could be attributed to women who were so far distant that there was virtually no way of verifying the myths. Thus in 19th century Europe, for instance, readers of travel literature could be deliciously scandalized by the "barbaric" state of relations between the sexes in countries as near to them as Egypt as well as in places many months distant from their own "civilized" borders.



While the advent of the 20th century's improved communications and travel opportunities brought a greater sense of reality to some of the earlier recorded imaginings of men (and possibly also to the largely un-recorded imaginings of women), the tendency to exoticize the unknown remains. This process, so well described by Edward Said in *Orientalism*, extended well beyond the confines of the Middle East. Reading 19th century travellers' accounts of the area then called Chinese Turkestan makes it clear that this phenomenon also made itself felt in Asia. Travelers and official visitors to this remote region provide one of the few sources on 19th-century Turkestani life, and while they contributed to the myth of the exotic Asian woman, they also provided some accurate details on many enduring aspects of society. For instance, the European accounts, summarized below, accurately record a variety of terms related to the status of women, but more importantly they also offer us portraits of women who had gained a considerable measure of independence and control over their own lives, despite the strictures placed on them by Islamic law and customary practice.



While interest in women of exotic lands appears to have been constant and unvarying on the part of 19th century European males, the mores of the time sometimes precluded detailed discussion of matters related to women,

marriage and "foreign" sexual practices. European "delicacy" with regard to such matters has left us with limited written records; in some instances European travellers professed such shock and indignation at what they saw and heard in foreign lands that they left us very little information indeed. The missionary Henry Lansdell, for example, whose account of a sojourn to Chinese Turkestan was published in 1894, refers most obliquely to what he found in Kashgar where the people's greatest weakness, in his view, was the "sexual depravity" of the inhabitants. There is no indication of what particular behavior he had witnessed—or more likely had been told of—except in a footnote where he writes (no doubt blushing as he did so) that girls of the city often had twenty husbands before they were even capable of being mothers, and further, that as there was a glut of women in the area, wives could be had very cheaply, at a rate of 4 to 5 shillings apiece.²

Other early travellers were not so reticent. Sir Douglas Forsyth, who visited Kashgar and Yarkand on two separate missions undertaken in 1870 and 1873 on behalf of the Bengal Civil Service, prepared a detailed report on his mission to "Yarkund" in 1873, published in Calcutta in 1875. Being a far more worldly man than Mr. Lansdell—and also because he had been charged with an official mission to report on the political situation as well as on the society of exotic and remote Turkestan—he included considerable detail on many aspects of Turkestani society, including women and marriage. With regard to the land and its inhabitants in general, his report is invariably complementary. This is in sharp contrast to Lansdell's, for he viewed Kashgaria as a most civil, friendly land, with fine markets and gardens, wonderful wheat bread and orderly, tidy homes. Indeed, in comparison to India, Sir Douglas found the region altogether agreeable, even approaching civilized Europe in many respects. He wrote of Yarkand: "There was an air of comfort even among the lower classes, and a something decidedly more in common with our ideas than is encountered elsewhere in the east."³ High praise indeed from a 19th century British gentleman. Yet when it came to "proper," and what he deemed civilized, behavior between the sexes, Sir Douglas was clearly contemptuous of what he called "the universal degradation of their amatory instincts and [their] concomitant indifference to the chastity of their women."⁴ While the first part of his remark, on amatory instincts, probably was a reference to the Muslim practice of taking more than one wife, the second part of his comment, on the society's indifference toward the chastity of its women, is less easy to explain away: chastity was and is, in popular conception, associated with a conservative society, and the Islamic world, with its seclusion of women and the imposition of the veil, could hardly be described as indifferent to female

² Henry Lansdell, *Chinese Central Asia: A Ride to Little Tibet*, 408-409.

³ Sir Douglas Forsyth, *Report of A Mission to Yarkund in 1873*, 6.

⁴ *Ibid.*

chastity. To what is he then referring? In trying to understand this seeming paradox, we need to look further into his account.

At the time Sir Douglas and his mission were in Turkestan, the rule of traditional Islamic law, the *Shari'a*, had returned, enforced by the newly established ruler of the region, Yakub Beg. With regard to the status of women, Forsyth gives two examples as symbolic of an improvement in public morality engendered by this stronger code of law: (1) suppression of public prostitution and (2) the ban on "*mata*" which he described as a form of temporary marriage.

With regard to prostitution, Forsyth writes that under former Chinese rule, the people of Kashgar in particular

were notorious for indulgence in all sorts of forbidden pleasures, meats, and drinks and amongst them flourished whole colonies of the gay and accommodating *chaucan*. All these are now strictly repressed and their loss is supplied by a more general resort to opium and a most degrading vice.⁵

The latter vice is not further explained, but it evidently did not refer to common prostitutes; according to Forsyth, the word for such a woman was "*jallab*," defined by him as a woman "who painted her face and decked herself in silks and laces to please her customers."⁶

Forsyth and other 19th century writers use a variety of terms for women which are indicative of women's social status as well as their role within the family. These terms offer one means by which to test the accuracy of the observations of men who did not, after all, speak any Turkic languages. It was also an opportunity to see whether the use of such terms has changed over the past century and a half. Two terms mentioned thus far are "*chaucan*" and "*jallab*," both used by the Europeans to indicate a less than virtuous woman. "*Jallab*" appears in a number of European sources, with the same spelling, defined in much the same way on each occasion. Skrine, whose work on Eastern Turkestan was published in 1926, defined her as "a lady of easy virtue."⁷ The currently used spelling in Xinjiang is "*jalap*" and is defined simply as a prostitute.⁸ In this instance there is no question but that the European visitors used the term correctly. The other term is a rather different case. The word "*chaucan*," now spelled "*qokan*," does not and did not even in Forsyth's day suggest any sort of impropriety. It simply referred to a young married woman, as it does today.⁹

⁵ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁷ Skrine, C.P., *Chinese Central Asia*, 203.

⁸ *Weihai Zidian*, 163.

⁹ *Ibid.* The same information was also given by informants in Kashgar in the summer of 1991.

A third term used above is "*mata*," or *mut'a*, a temporary, contracted marriage, allowed under Shī'a Islam but prohibited by Sunni juridical schools.¹⁰ Indeed, the Hanafi juridical school to which Xinjiang Muslims adhered condemned this type of marriage, considering it to be void. Nonetheless, Forsyth described this "mariage de convenance" accurately, noting correctly that it was a union which was contracted for a fixed period with money paid at the end of the contract.¹¹ The existence of this form of marriage in the southern Xinjiang area throughout the century under discussion raises the important issue of Turkestani orthodoxy, a subject to which I will return later in the paper.

The terms mentioned above were also used by other European visitors: the Earl of Dunmore, who visited the region for three months in 1892, for instance, also noted the existence of "*mata*"¹² and correctly identified it as a Shī'a practice. He also refers to the "*chankan*" who, he writes, was a woman only married once and with no children.¹³ He adds two additional terms for respectable women that do not occur in the earlier sources: these are "*kiz*," which he defines as a maiden; and the term "*jowan*"—defined as a woman who has been married and has children. The latter term does not appear in Forsyth but it does appear in Skrine's early 20th century account, used to describe an "older woman," or as Skrine more specifically put it, a woman of age 30 or so who has "attained years of discretion."¹⁴ The three terms for respectable woman contained in these travellers' accounts are thus *kiz*, *gokan* and *javan*. (These and other words with their various English, Arabic and Chinese equivalents are given in Appendix A.)

Uniformity can also be found in the various accounts when the discussion turns to the matter of the marriage ceremony, or "*nikah*." The description appears accurate enough in all its details: The *mullah* reads from the Qur'ān, the symbolic eating of bread dipped in salted water occurs, the payment of a small fee to the presiding *mullah* at the end of the ceremony is made, and several days of festivities follow. The general description does not vary much in records over the hundred year period, and elements of the ceremony as recorded in these sources remain a part of Uygur culture today. On a number of important points related to women and marriage, therefore, 19th and 20th century accounts seem generally accurate.

Difficulty arises, however, in the far more sensitive area of women and divorce. On this topic the sources cited thus far all comment on the prevalence of divorce in southern Turkestan. Forsyth, in the earliest of the accounts, describes a process of serial marriage as being common in Turkestani cul-

¹⁰ An exception to this occurs in one Sunni juridical school, but even in this instance it is the time element that is considered void, while the contract of marriage remains valid.

¹¹ Forsyth, 334.

¹² Earl of Dunmore, *The Pamirs* Vol I, 334.

¹³ Dunmore, 333.

¹⁴ Skrine, 202.

ture. Most intriguingly, these serial marriages are not described as the work of licentious males seeking to enjoy wife after wife, discarding them as his whim dictates—an image of Islamic society common at that time. Rather, divorce in Kashgar, in particular, is presented as effected by the Kashgari women, who by means of multiple marriages and divorces had discovered a way to gain independence from men and to re-gain a status taken from them by the imposition of Islamic law by Yakub Beg. Forsyth's description of this process of emancipation through repeated divorce and re-marriage re-occurs with great consistency in the sources. The practice as they saw it can be summarized as follows:

In Kashgar a woman would be married for the first time at a very young age, 12-13 years old, by the arrangement of the families. These marriages rarely lasted, for the partners were young and had not been consulted in the matter. Thus after the first divorce, a woman would have more say in the choosing of the second husband. But some women, of great beauty and/or great wit, would also divorce this second one, often initiating a quarrel for just that purpose, to make the man pronounce the words of divorce and then give her the necessary papers to prove her divorced state. This proof, an affidavit of divorce or *'jai*," was issued by a local judge or *'qazi*," for a small fee. When the woman had this paper, she would be able to negotiate a third marriage herself, once the prescribed period of waiting had ended. (The period of waiting, the *'iddat*, was 3 months and 10 days according to the travellers' accounts; in Islamic law it is three of the woman's menstrual cycles). Once the woman had been married and divorced twice, the *'iddat* no longer applied and she would be free to marry as often as she wished. In keeping with Islamic law, the woman upon divorce was to receive the *"mehr*," or dower she was promised by the man at the time of the marriage; she could forfeit this in private negotiations if she wanted to offer further inducement to divorce her. In the European accounts, an attractive woman could go on doing this until she had acquired sufficient wealth and/or repute to wed someone of her own choosing, with whom she would then ultimately settle down. Independent, good-looking Kashgari women could thus marry a series of husbands, the ultimate goal of which was independence. Or so thought the European visitors to this most exotic and strange land.



The credibility of these accounts seems most strained when they mention, with mixed awe and disgust, that some women were able to marry as many as 30 or 40 husbands. The Earl of Dunmore noted in 1893 that,

It is impossible to find in Yarkand a man or a woman who has only once been married in his or her lifetime, the majority of the women

having had as many as 30 to 40 husbands in their lifetime and the men as many wives.

He added that "the matrimonial laws are not held at all sacred, and the knot is very easy to untie."¹⁵ This last observation is echoed by Lady MacCartney, wife of George MacCartney, British Consul at Kashgar at the turn of the century, who wrote, with considerable distaste, that divorce papers were usually drawn up at the same time as the marriage contract in order to save time when the marriage subsequently—and inevitably—dissolved.¹⁶ Skrine also commented on the inevitable dissolution of the first marriage, noting that in nine cases out of ten, the "child-marriage de convenance" failed and was dissolved.¹⁷



As noted previously, many of the European accounts are those of men. It is unfortunate for the historical record that Lady MacCartney of Kashgar was far from being Lady Mary Wortley, whose visits to Ottoman empire harems have left a vivid image of 18th century women in Turkey. But there were a few European women who visited the far northwest of China in the early 20th century: the intrepid missionaries Mildred Cable and Francesca French were visitors to the area in the 1920s and 1930s, and in their remarkable books they adverted to the difficult lot of Turkestani women. In their 1927 book, *Through the Jade Gate and Central Asia*, they described how they usually had easy access to the women of the harems of Turkestan, and were, therefore, able to see first hand the circumstances of these women's lives. As they described it,

... as soon as we appeared, women and girls emerged on every side and sat down with us, forming a gay picture with their brightly colored dresses and white veils thrown up against the green cornfields behind. The Moslem women are intelligent, but they are only viewed as providing temporary gratification to their husbands who take them into favour or thrust them aside at pleasure, even divorcing them or bringing fresh wives to the home on the slightest provocation.¹⁸

The missionaries further observed, in stereotypical fashion, that the male was a truly despotic character, interested in lust rather than in the stability of his family,

The foundation of the Turki home is undisguised gratification of sensuous pleasures On that score he is master, and tyrannical in his use of power, for the male creation has unquestioned right of dictatorship in

¹⁵ Dunmore, 334.

¹⁶ Macartney, Lady Catherine, *A British Lady in Chinese Turkestan*, 129.

¹⁷ Skrine, 200.

¹⁸ Cable and French, *Through the Jade Gate and Central Asia*, 269.

the Turki world. He has too many children to be deeply attached to any one of them. . . .¹⁹

Male observers were not unaware of the very negative side of women's status under Islamic law. C.P. Skrine, for instance, noted the plight of some oasis women whose husbands wished to divorce them. All a husband need do was pronounce the words of divorce. He would then go to the *Qazi*, or local judge, for the necessary papers. The woman's presence was not necessary. Once an affidavit was signed the woman was divorced. For her part, "A wife cannot divorce her husband without his consent; all she can do is to leave him and wait until he divorces her, when she can marry someone else after 100 days."²⁰

Skrine in fact was sympathetic to what he considered the plight of Turkestani women, noting the "weakness of their position," and "the looseness of the marriage tie." Life was made difficult, in his view, because in urban areas in particular women had no security: husbands could desert their wives, leaving them with "insufficient maintenance or none at all."²¹

While writing of the "plight" of Muslim women in Turkestan, Skrine at the same time noted that "even in the towns the position of women is not nearly so bad as in most Mohammedan countries. Only the wives of the wealthiest are strictly veiled and even they visit each other's houses, as in Persia."²² He pointed out that women also participated in the city's day to day commercial activity and also performed a variety of jobs. Far from being secluded at home, Turkestani women were clearly a public part of the social fabric in early twentieth century Xinjiang. Skrine summarized this activity,

The women of the middle and lower classes have their own riding-donkeys and do their shopping in the bazaars freely; as often as not it is the wife who holds the purse-strings and does the selling of the farm-produce as well as the buying. Nowadays it is quite a common thing for a married woman to have her own profession, dress-making, cap-embroidering, cotton spinning, midwifery, cooking at restaurants, dyeing, soap-making, laundering, brokering and so on.²³

This impression of women as having a certain degree of independence, playing an important role in both the family and in commercial activity of the cities, is strengthened by his remarks on divorce, for he saw in the relative ease with which divorce was granted an advantage for some women, at least,

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 168.

²⁰ Skrine, 200.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Skrine, 201.

²³ Skrine, 201.

On the whole, the term "*mazlum-kishi*" (oppressed person) which is the regular word for "woman" in Kashgaria, need not be taken too seriously. A woman above average in looks or wit profits as much by the looseness of the marriage tie as her less-favoured sister suffers from it; she can exchange an uncongenial husband for a better one with very little difficulty. A Kashgar beauty dates her past life by her successive husbands. . . .²⁴

One final point of interest conveyed by the 20th century travellers' accounts is their concurrence on the high status of older women, and of women who have been married and divorced not once but several times. According to Skrine, for instance, a married woman,

. . . does not reach her full social status until she is 30 years old or more. . . . She is now more important and respected than before; she is also worth more on the marriage market, for men do not like child-brides who know nothing and may at any moment run away back to their parents, whereas they will actually spend several hundred tengas . . . for the privilege of marrying a good-looking *jawan*.²⁵

Judged by late 20th century standards, the overall impression of the Turkestani woman that emerges from the European accounts cited above is that of a woman capable of controlling her own fate if given the right circumstances. Further, a woman's value within Turkestani society appears to have been heightened by divorce, rather than diminished, and despite the condemnation with which divorce and re-marriage were greeted by various outside observers, this status was hardly an obstacle within local society. While men held the power of divorce, as in other Islamic societies, some women appear to have learned very well how to manipulate the system, gaining a measure of control over their lives that seems remarkable, given the place and time.

Ultimately, however, the European accounts are paradoxical when it comes to descriptions of the status of women within Turkestani society. On the one hand, these women are depicted as limited within the strictures of an Islamic society, especially by the husband's power to divorce them, to marry several wives at one time, to avail themselves of *mut'a* marriages and to avoid maintaining a divorced wife and/or their children. On the other hand, they are also depicted as being less constrained by Islamic practices than their sisters in the more conservative Middle East. Unencumbered by strict observance of the veil or the practice of seclusion, and able to exercise some control in the choice of marriage partner, (particularly in the case of a second, third, or successive husbands), Turkestani women seem far more independent and of generally higher status than either their Han Chinese neighbors or their co-religionists

²⁴ Skrine, 202-203.

²⁵ Skrine, 203.

of the Middle East. For a comparison with Chinese values and consideration of the Chinese perception of Turkestani marriage and divorce, we need to turn to Chinese sources.

Chinese Perceptions, Local Culture

A sampling of Chinese writings on Turkestani marriage and on family-related issues reveals some of the traditional Han Chinese attitudes towards peoples of the border regions. It is not the purpose of this paper to analyze these in comparison to the accounts of Europeans; in general, however, both sources contain valid descriptions as well as culturally biased statements that, as is common with such sources, reveals as much about the observer and his or her values as about the subject under discussion.

Late Qing records on Xinjiang refer to three kinds of marriage among the Turkic people. The first type is called "*tianding*" or "determined by God." This type of marriage was arranged by an Ahong who presided over gatherings of single men and women held at the local mosque. The Ahong would talk with the young people about marriage and would then designate which man should marry which woman. The pair exchanged caps to signify their betrothal. According to Qing sources, this "*tianding*" marriage could not be refused.²⁶

Two other types of marriage are also mentioned: "*Maimaihun*" or commercial marriage, and "*ziyou*" or free marriage. The former may equate to the institution of *mut'a* but as no time limit is mentioned this remains unclear. The free marriage did occur according to European sources as well, but usually this was only if it was not a woman's first marriage.

Chinese sources concur most closely with the Europeans on the ease of divorce in Turkestan. If a couple were discontent in their marriage, they could simply divorce, with the man taking the boys and the woman the girls. There were no social or legal impediments to either a man or woman re-marrying.

Recent Chinese accounts of 19-20th century Uygur society dwell on the great inequities of the old feudal system in Xinjiang before 1949. They note that men could have one to four wives, although they admit this happened rarely. They also call attention to the fact that people married early, as early as age twelve for boys and age nine for girls, although the average was usually a bit older than this.²⁷ Early adolescent marriage is thus a feature of both European and Chinese perceptions up through the first half of the twentieth century.

Because of early marriage in the "old" society, Chinese accounts assert that naturally many married couples were dissatisfied and as a result divorce

²⁶ Hong Jiasheng, ed. *Weiwuerzu shiliao jianbian* (Xia). (Historical Materials on the Uygur People), 456-457.

²⁷ *Weiwuerzu jianshi bianxuezu*, *Weiwuer jianshi*, (A Brief History of the Uygurs), 358-359.

in the region was very common. This current view does not differ much from Chinese accounts of the 1930s. Nationalist Chinese official Aitchen Wu, for instance, who served in the government in Urumqi for some years, noted that relations between men and women in Turkestan were easy, even casual, with divorce a common and unremarkable trait of the local population, done with little formality or fuss.²⁸ Chinese sources thus concur with European depictions of the prevalence of divorce and the ease with which divorce could be arranged.

From two different cultural perspectives, then, the Turkestani women present an image of individuals who, because of the ease of divorce (from both sides, it is implied) have gained a measure of control over their lives, especially over their sexual behavior. In the moralistic societies of both China and Europe, such women were indeed exotic, easily fitting into the realm of the erotic, exotic foreign female who has managed to escape the domination of males. But if this was an outsiders view, what of the culture itself?



Answering this question is particularly difficult as the Turkestani women have (thus far) had almost no voice of their own within Xinjiang history. As noted earlier, written records are very limited with regard to woman and their private lives. What is available, however, are literary sources and folktales. Although these offer an indirect measure of women's status within Turkestani culture, they nonetheless afford a glimpse of local perception of women's lives.

Local Perceptions, Local Culture

One of the most popular literary forms in Turkic Central Asia is the epic poem or "*dastan*." These sagas of adventure and heroism have been recounted for centuries and remain popular with today's Uygur, Uzbek, and other Turkic speaking peoples from the Altai to the Ural Mountains. In virtually all of these epics, women play an important role. One example of this genre is the epic story of Alpamysh, a legendary hero admired throughout Central Asia. While the poem itself concerns the exploits of the young hero, the role of his sweetheart is equally important. She is the beautiful Barchin, to whom Alpamysh is betrothed. The girl is described in the poem as a great beauty; her father calls her his pearl, apple of his eye.²⁹ A fond father, he is in despair when two powerful princes vie for her hand. He asks her which one she wishes to choose, clearly conveying to us the fact that this young woman is not regarded as chattel to be disposed of but a person in her own right, to be

²⁸ Aitchen Wu, *Turkestan Tumult*, 217.

²⁹ Paksoy, H.B., *Alpamysh: Central Asian Identity under Russian Rule* (1989). This book includes a translation of this *dastan* as well as an informative introduction.

consulted and even deferred to when it comes to determining her future. In response to offers of marriage, Barchin herself confronts the representatives of her suitors, suggesting a competition between them in order to gain time for her beloved to arrive and rescue her. While the heroic battles and fighting which follow are largely the preserve of men, Barchin and other women in the poem are important actors, offering advice and speaking out publicly. Neither reticent nor weak, these women reflect the steppe tradition of womanhood.

A further example from a well-known literary work is seen in the poem *Manas*, in which the women are at least as heroic and militant as the men. The wife of the hero Manas, called Kanykai, has all the qualities of the steppe ideal for women: She is loyal, gracious, hospitable, of highest honor and culture, as well as a skillful cook and a doctor. Although this poem is now identified as a Kirghiz epic, it is nonetheless a part of traditional Turkestani culture of the Xinjiang area and clearly reflects not only the traditional mores of nomadic culture but also the relatively high status of women within Turkic culture in general.³⁰

Uygur love stories of the past century also offer us an image of women as strong, independent individuals with identities as clearly established as those of the male heroes. For example, in the story of Taxguli, a beautiful young shepherdess and her lover Yaseen, the young woman struggles bravely against the evil designs of a local Beg. While the heroine is finally killed at the end of the story, she has died fighting. Her death is thus heroic, and her character is clearly that of defiance. Yet another story concerns a royal wife who boldly rides to the rescue of her own commoner-husband; slaying his captors, she frees him, making herself the heroine of the story and a model of strength and determination for Turkestani women.³¹

Uygur attitudes toward their male and female children in the one hundred year period under discussion are also reflected in other aspects of folk culture. Local proverbs, for instance, indicate how welcome the birth of a child of either sex was to an Uygur family in the 19th century. One proverb says:

*Ogli barnin ozi bar
Kizi barnin ize bar.*

Translated, this means that sons inherit the family business, daughters continue the next generation. Both roles are of fundamental importance in Uygur society; both sexes are welcomed for what they bring to the family overall.

³⁰ Chadwick, Nora and Victor Zhirmunsky, *Oral Epics of Central Asia*, especially chapter 3.

³¹ Zhao Shille, "A Preliminary discussion of Uygur Love Stories," *Social Sciences in Xinjiang*, 71-72.

Another proverb says: "*Dunyada balidin artuk baylik yok.*" This translates as "In all the world, there are no riches greater than precious children."³²

While proverbs and literary examples do not in themselves constitute proof of high social status for women, they are at least one local indicator of the importance placed upon having children and, importantly, children who are of either sex. This is in contrast, for instance, with the traditional Han Chinese attitude which favors boys.

The difference between Turkestani and Han Chinese attitudes toward children was not lost on European visitors to the region. In the 1920s, Skrine went so far as to write that among the middle and lower classes, daughters "are more desired than sons because there is always the chance of a girl bringing a wealthy husband into the family. . . ." Whether this economic angle was of great importance or not, the birth of a girl to an Uygur family was clearly viewed differently from that of poor Chinese households where a female child might well not live beyond infancy if there were too many male mouths to be fed.



Taken together, the literary examples cited above imply that the status of women in Turkestan was relatively high. Daughters were welcomed and strong young women of considerable character figure prominently in the songs and poetry of the region. This image then reinforces that conveyed in European accounts which, for all their obvious biases, nonetheless depict some women as having a considerable degree of control over their lives.

One implication of this image is that Turkestani culture was less orthodox in its observance of Islamic law when it came to marriage and the family; indeed, if women did exercise a certain amount of control in the family and if they did play the role in marriage, divorce, and re-marriage that is at least suggested strongly in the above accounts, then to what extent did Islam influence family life in the Turkestani region? As the family unit is a vital element in Islam elsewhere, disregard for the family as a basic unit of society could call into question the degree of Muslim influence in the society as a whole. The question of Uygur orthodoxy in marriage and divorce is thus a matter of great interest, and it is to this question that we now turn.

Islamic Law and Turkestani Practice

In order to examine the question of Uygur orthodoxy, it is necessary first to establish the patterns of marriage and divorce common to other Islamic

³² Abdulhamitova C. A., "The Uygur Family in the Latter Half of the 19th Century," (in Russian), 5.

societies. Despite the importance of this subject, there are few studies on marriage and divorce rates for Islamic countries for the period under discussion or even for the more recent past. Sources that are available, however, do offer some insight into the frequency of marriage and re-marriage; this information is summarized below.

Two Western studies of marriage and divorce are of special interest. In 1963, Goode published a study of Arabic societies which indicated that divorce rates up through the middle of the twentieth century were high by Western standards. His findings were partially confirmed by a 1974 study by Prothro and Diab who focused on marriage among Sunni Muslims of the Middle East. They concluded that despite observations by a number of European authors on the prevalence of divorce in Sunni communities, divorce rates in the early 20th century villages of the Middle East remained very low. Urban rates, on the other hand were high, and in some Islamic countries the rates in cities were high by world standards, thus partially confirming Goode's earlier findings.³³

A reading of studies such as those cited above also makes it clear that few people in Islamic societies remain unmarried. As Leila Ahmed's recent study of women and gender in Islam points out, between the 15th and the 16th centuries, marriage, divorce and re-marriage in Middle Eastern societies was common, and, more importantly, was common for *both* women and men.³⁴ Thus historically a divorced woman in Islamic societies around the world has not necessarily been a woman scorned, as she was in even fashionable circles in early 20th century Europe and America. Muslim women did re-marry, and as a woman of legal age could not be married without her consent, it would appear that divorce and re-marriage did allow at least some women to form a marital union with men of their own choosing. Thus Prothro and Goode, for instance, both conclude that the image of Islamic women living in "a state of submission enforced by the threat of divorce" is a fantasy of the Western male and "as with so many fantasies, it fades on contact with reality."³⁵

This is not to say that women in Islamic countries have enjoyed the freedom of movement, of education and of choice in regard to their first marriage partner or of later partners that Western women have, but it does mean that the popular stereotypical perception of Muslim women must be revised.

With regard to Islamic northwestern China, the description of the relative ease of divorce there, for both men and women, moves closer to the reality of the Islamic mainstream than first impressions might suggest. For, if Prothro and Diab are correct in their conclusion of higher rates of divorce in urban/settled

³³ Edwin Prothro and Lutfy Najib Diab, *Changing Family Patterns in the Arab East*, and William J. Goode, *World Revolution and Family Patterns*.

³⁴ Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*.

³⁵ Prothro and Diab, 186.

areas, then this has implications for Xinjiang where many Uyghur live in an arguably urban environment. High incidence of divorce and repeated marriage would not place Xinjiang's Islamic society totally beyond Islamic norms.

There are, however, still two areas in which local practices appear to have deviated considerably from those in other Islamic societies. The first of these is the often repeated claim that Turkestani women married many times over, thereby increasing their value on the marriage market. Other than European sources, however, there is little information to support the image of the "much-married women" of Turkestan. While in Xinjiang in the summer of 1991, I attempted to find information that could confirm or disprove this. Unfortunately, I was offered only more anecdotal evidence, most of it from Han Chinese who tended to confirm the stories. For instance, I was told of one elderly Uyghur woman, of a very poor household, who had married over 40 times. Her reason for this was that it was "more interesting;" certainly at age 72 she had many memories with which to console herself. But stories were also offered of men who married repeatedly, well into their eighties. This, I was told, was because it kept them young. As the law in the PRC allows only one wife at a time, the determination to remain young—and to have "an interesting life"—appears to be as powerful an urge as it is in the USA. Such stories suggest, but in no way confirm, that in some segments of society at least, repeated marriage has remained as an enduring feature of Turkestani society.

One of the few recent articles published in China on this topic appeared in 1985 and touched on the issue of marriage and divorce in Kashgar. This article is based on the 1982 census and on a series of interviews with workers at the Kashgar Cotton Spinning and Weaving Mill. Among other statistics were the following: of some 80 Uyghurs (men and women) 35% had been married twice; 11% had married three times and two individuals had married 4 times. When separated by gender, 41% of the 39 men had married twice, 12% had married three times. Of the 41 women, 10 had been married twice, 4 had been married 3 times, but none had married 4 times or more.³⁶ While this study is extremely limited, it does point to the possibility of a continued tradition on the southern oases of a relatively relaxed attitude toward divorce and remarriage, for both men and women.

One further element remains to be discussed; that is the existence of *mut'a* marriages, the second area in which Xinjiang Muslims appear to stray from the Sunni path. Historically, *mut'a*, or marriage for pleasure, was accepted within early Islam. It was viewed as a practical and expedient form of marriage for men far distant from their homes; rather than give in to temptations, a man could contract a temporary marriage, with the period of time and the amount of money to be given the woman fixed in the contract. Over

³⁶ *Xinjiang Daxue Xuebao*, June 1985, 5.

the centuries, however, the various juridical schools prohibited this form of marriage and within Sunni practice it was banned. The reasoning was that marriage was for the establishment of a lawful and permanent partnership, the founding of a family and the care and upbringing of children.³⁷ The Hanafi juridical school of Sunni Islam confirms this view with one exception. Zafar ibn ul-Hudhail, a Hanafi jurist, accepted the *mut'ā* marriage contract as a valid contract, but at the same time he considered the time limit to be void. Such a marriage was thus a valid marriage and conferred the same responsibilities and obligations as an ordinary marriage.

In the Shī'a tradition, however, *mut'ā* was an accepted form of marriage, as long as the marriage partner was a Muslim, Christian, Jew or "magi" (Zoroastrian). Two further conditions had to be met: the time period had to be fixed in the contract, from a day to a year or number of years; and second the amount of money, or dower, had to be specified. There is no need for divorce in this instance as the marriage terminates on the last day as agreed.

For Turkestani Muslims who were Sunni of the Hanafi school, *mut'ā* marriage was not supposed to be an option by the 19th century. Forsyth and Dunsmore, however, both noted the prevalence of the practice—to such an extent that Yakub Beg had it banned during the period of his rule in the region. While the largely anecdotal information we have from such sources does not indicate its prevalence, it did apparently occur.

Its existence alone is of interest: Moroccan feminist writer Fatima Mernissi has observed that the reasons for outlawing *mut'ā* were perhaps more complicated than the usual Islamic explanation (as cited above) would allow.³⁸ She contends that the reason it was eliminated was that this form of marriage violated two fundamental principles of Islam's ideal of the sexual union: first, the woman in this marriage had as much freedom as the man, in both contracting and terminating the marriage. This certainly appears to be the case, for the woman could enter this freely and could leave or renew the agreement as she chose. Mernissi also contends that this marriage was eliminated because it violated paternity rules. In fact, most Islamic jurists appear to agree that children born of this type of union are still legitimate and can inherit from the father, thus maintaining paternity. The woman did not, however, have any right to maintenance from the man once the contract was finished.³⁹

Mernissi's observation that this form of marriage gave women freedom within Islam is of particular interest in relation to Xinjiang. It is possible, for instance, that the "much-married woman" of the southern oases were marrying under the *mut'ā* system, in which case the number of partners would not

³⁷ Nasir, Jamal J., *The Status of Women Under Islamic Law and Under Modern Islamic Legislation*, 16.

³⁸ Fatima Mernissi, *Beyond the Veil* (Revised edition), 77.

³⁹ For an interesting discussion of *mut'ā* see Sheikh Abrar Husain, *Marriage Customs Among Muslims in India*, 170-184.

have constituted disregard for Islamic law or the sanctity of marriage; rather it could be seen as conforming to a sanctioned form of marriage not understood by either European or Chinese observers. The freedom such a marriage allowed would also "fit" the image of women we have seen conveyed in popular literature of the region and the important role played by women in commercial activity in the area as well.

A troubling question nonetheless remains: if *mutʿa* marriages were fairly common, or even if they were tolerated at all, why were Sunni Muslims following a Shiʿa practice? Thus far there are no easy explanations, but there are a number of possibilities which I can only suggest at this point. One is the probable influence of sufi Muslim orders in the Xinjiang region; these orders often adapted to local conditions, allowing for the easier acceptance of Islamic belief. John Voll has described these *tariqahs* as "mediating structures" making it possible for Islam's universal message to be adapted to local conditions.⁴⁰ As "local conditions" prior to the arrival of Islam included a relatively high status for women, then this heritage may well be reflected in the weaker marriage tie as well as in the "independent spirit" of some Turkestani women.



Another factor may be important but difficult to document: recent anthropological work –by women– suggests that male/female perceptions of religion may well differ. On observing supposed subordination of women in Hawaiian society, Patricia Limerick notes that there is "a good chance that women and men responded to formal religion in different ways. Even if official priest-administered religion tried to tell women they were inferior, there is no guaranteed evidence that they fully accepted that message."⁴¹

Anecdotal evidence is also suggestive of other factors: when I inquired about this form of marriage, one Uyghur woman agreed that this had, indeed, happened in the "old" society. Her explanation was that this form of marriage was related to the region's commercial activity. Businessmen would often stay for prolonged periods in the region because travel from Xinjiang to neighboring regions was so difficult (e.g. to Pakistan and Central Asia). As Muslims, it was considered better that they take a "temporary" wife in a *mutʿa* marriage than visit prostitutes. Further, the new wife would cook and do laundry, thus cutting down on any expenses for the duration of the man's stay in the area. As this appears to be the motivation for at least some *mutʿa* marriages among Shiʿa Muslims today, this, too, may be one explanation for adoption of this marriage form in the oasis cities of the south Tarim basin.

⁴⁰ John Voll, "Soviet Central Asia and China: Integration or Isolation of Muslim Societies," *Islam in China*, 137.

⁴¹ Patricia Limerick, "The Multicultural Islands," *American Historical Review*, 131.

Conclusion

The image of Turkestani women that emerges from the various sources used for this paper remains blurred. European descriptions raise intriguing questions about overall status of women as well as the attitudes and practices in Turkestani society toward marriage and divorce. Chinese and European materials concur that the family appears to have been an unstable unit within Turkestani society because of the relative ease of divorce. As the family is fundamental to Muslim society, the extent to which the family is or is not maintained may offer one measure of the strength of Islam within the region. If future research confirms the impressions offered here of a society in which family and marital ties were easily dissolved, then the role of Islam as an integrative element and as a cohesive force within Turkestani society in the recent past will need to be more carefully examined.

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CONFIRMATION OF SHĪ'ISM IN AMERICA AN ANALYSIS OF SERMONS IN THE DEARBORN MOSQUES

Once under . . . a bush (Ali) saw the war of the ants. He instantly knew the cause of the war and the nature of the parties. The red ants, whose bite (he had been told) was slightly poisonous, were Sunnis, the party among the Muslims that rejected the claim of the descendants of Ali, and they were attacking the black ants, who were obviously Shiah, since black as well as green was the color worn by people like Ali Hashemi's father who claimed descent from (the Imam) Ali. He remembers admiring the black ants for the justness of their cause and their individual heroism; but as the battle continued he began to admire the orderliness and steadfastness of the slower-moving red ants. As far as he could tell, neither side won.

An account of a cleric as a young boy¹

The centerpiece of any mosque event in Dearborn, Michigan, whether spiritual or purely social, is the sermon. Frequently, more than one sermon is delivered at a single event. In Islam it is customary to think of the sermon as being associated with Friday prayers. However, in Dearborn, to neglect the sermons of other occasions would be to deny the importance of the experience of the majority of mosque goers in the community. For more people attend Sunday services at the Islamic Center of America (known to the community as the *Jāmi'*) than they do the Friday prayer service at any of the Shī'ite Lebanese mosques in the Detroit area. Furthermore, men, women and children are present for the Sunday sermons while Friday prayers at the mosques still draw only men. (However, it should be pointed out that the Friday sermons from the Islamic Institute, the *Majma'*, are televised.) Aside from these regular occasions, there are also sermons delivered at memorials, engagements, commemorative occasions, etc.

Necessarily, then, this paper will be only an overview of the types of subjects addressed in the sermons and the different styles used to convey messages.

¹ Roy Mottehedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985), p. 30.

A Brief History of the Lebanese Shī'a in Dearborn

Dearborn, Michigan, is home to the largest population of Arab Muslims in America and a majority of these are Lebanese Shī'a. Most come directly from either southern Lebanon, often from areas now under Israeli occupation, or from the Beka'a, although some have lived for varying periods of time in Beirut. The Lebanese Shī'a who came to Dearborn from 1918 through the 1950s to work in the Ford Motor plants shared a mosque and social and religious activities with their Sunni neighbors. But largely due to the efforts of Shaykh Muhammad Jawad Chirri, a Lebanese-born *ʿālim* who had received some funding from Egyptian President Gamal 'Abd al-Nāsir, and to the sacrifices of the fledgling community, a Shī'ite mosque was built and its doors opened in 1963. Like other Muslim communities in America, its members were relatively well assimilated into their new culture.

After the onset of the Lebanese Civil War, thousands of refugees flowed into Dearborn. Many of them, affected by Middle Eastern events, particularly the Iranian Revolution, found the Dearborn Muslims to be too accommodating to American society. They wished for a stricter interpretation of Islam and some for a politicized version of it. As a consequence, the Islamic Institute (the *Majma'*), with Shaykh Abdul Latif Berry as its imam, came into being. A third mosque, the Islamic Council, or the *Majlis*, was opened in 1989. Its leader, Shaykh Mohammad Ali Burro, has close ties with Iran which are reflected in the *Majlis'* activities.² As Shaykh Chirri became old and quite feeble during the late 1980s, there were attempts to find a successor for him. Shaykhs Berri and Burro both started their careers in America in this capacity; however, both found themselves in disagreement with the *Jāmi'* leadership and left. In 1990 an *ʿālim* from the Beka'a, Shaykh Sa'il Attat, was brought to Dearborn. Although earlier immigrants and their offspring complain about his lack of English, he has thus far been more successful in maintaining good relations than his predecessors. To meet the needs of the non-Arabic speaking members of the Islamic Center of America (almost all of whom are of Lebanese descent), a layman generally delivers a sermon in English.

The following discussion of mosque sermons is based on my anthropological fieldwork conducted between 1987 and 1990. During that time I attended mosque functions, watched televised mosque events and interviewed the members of the Lebanese Shī'i community.

² For further discussion of the Dearborn mosques, see my "Shī'i Islam in an American Community," 1991, an unpublished doctoral dissertation

Those Delivering the Sermons

It is not possible to separate the sermon from its deliverer. The majority of sermons heard in the mosques in Dearborn are delivered by men who have undergone training in one or more of the holy cities of Shi'ism. All have received some training at Najaf in Iraq, and two of them also trained in Qum in Iran. According to Michael Fischer³ a man receives his training to become a member of the *'ulamā'* by selecting a teacher, a *mujtahid*, with whom he wishes to study. Some of these teachers are grand ayatollahs such as Golpayegani, Mar'ashi and others whose names became familiar during the early days of the Iranian Revolution. The teacher uses a dialectical style of argument and counterargument in this teaching, and those students who are able to participate in such arguments are encouraged to do so. A topic, such as one's intention when proceeding to pray, will continue for a period of several days. The teacher will illustrate the fine points of the theological debate and the various ways the argument can be approached. In these theological schools there is a refusal to deal with any possible scriptural symbolism. The approach to the Qur'ān and the traditions of the Prophet is completely literal.

At the end of his training the student is qualified to be a teacher of other Muslims himself. His position may be that of a lowly village *mulla* (the Iranian term for shaykh) or he may become a specialist on one area of Islamic learning, depending on his talents, capacities and interests.

In anthropological terms, these men are trained to become "priests" in the fullest sense of the term. As Turner says, "the priest is concerned with the conservation and maintenance of a deposit of beliefs and practices handed down as a sacred trust from the founders of the social and religious system."⁴ His power is derived from the knowledge he has received from his elders and he thereby transmits this knowledge in as "pure" a form as possible in order to preserve the entire religious heritage. He is a preserver of culture. It should be noted that Muslims are often opposed to using the terms priest and clergy when referring to the *'ulamā'* because these men are not ordained and do not administer sacraments as they do in Christianity. However, as we shall see, the term priest as defined as a transmitter and preserver of knowledge is very suitable.

³ Michael Fischer, *Iran: From Religious Dispute to Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980).

⁴ Victor W. Turner, "Religious Specialists," in Arthur C. Lehmann and James E. Myers, eds, *Magic, Witchcraft and Religion: An Anthropological Study of the Supernatural*, 2nd ed. (Mountain View, California: Mayfield Publishing Co., 1989), pp. 85-92.

Styles of Presentation

One of the predominant roles of the shaykhs in the Dearborn area is to deliver sermons in the mosques and, as mentioned earlier, the shaykhs are called upon to deliver sermons for a great variety of occasions. To determine the message that is being delivered in these sermons, it is necessary to examine not only content but also the style and language used to deliver the message. When referring to "language" I am not only referring to the actual tongue used; i.e., Arabic vs. English (although this is certainly an important consideration), but also the formality of the language. In the case of Arabic, this means a choice between the standard form, *al-fuṣḥā*, the language of the Qurʾān (also known as classical Arabic), and the colloquial form. Since *al-fuṣḥā* is the language of the sacred scripture, it is therefore deemed the only form of Arabic suitable for conveying religious ideas. A shaykh giving a sermon in Arabic is not expected to speak the everyday language of the people while delivering a sermon. To do so would be totally inappropriate and tantamount to admitting his ignorance and unsuitability for his position. It is his knowledge of the sacred texts that qualifies him to be a shaykh and knowledge of the Arabic language is the primary requirement upon which all else is built.

The three shaykhs mentioned above have arrived from Lebanon in the past ten years; they all preach exclusively in standard Arabic. Their style of speech conforms to what Bloch⁵ refers to as formalized speech acts. Limitations on loudness, intonation, vocabulary, and sources for illustrations are all apparent and the speakers all conform to certain stylistic rules. The question arises as to whether or not the use of such formalized speech affects the message that is being conveyed. Bloch argues that it does. Formalized speech, he claims, prevents the speaker from tackling specific issues or dealing with divisive actions. It conveys less information about the world than ordinary speech, but it enhances its "illocutionary" potential; i.e., its ability to influence people. What the speaker says is predictable. The constraints of the speaking style make it so. The predictability of the speech is what makes it "coercive." As Boyer puts it, "the actors are 'caught' in a discursive pattern which makes it impossible to disagree or contradict, since the series of utterances is predetermined from the outset. Ritual language can thus serve an ideological purpose in that it is a 'hidden' yet powerful mechanism which reduces drastically the possibility of dissent."⁶

If Bloch's theory is correct, one should find that the topics of sermons are of a purely traditional nature and that subjects reaching outside the realm of

⁵ Maurice Bloch, "Introduction," in Maurice Bloch, ed. *Political Language and Oratory in Traditional Society* (London: Academic Press, 1975)

⁶ Pascal Boyer, *Tradition as Truth and Communication* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 83.

conservative Shi'ism are not addressed. Antoun found that the preacher in the Jordanian village which he studied also conformed to formalized speech, yet was able to handle local and divisive issues in his sermons.⁷ Since the sermons from Dearborn are delivered by several speakers and the circumstances under which they are made are more complex than in the Jordanian village, as we shall see, it is not possible to draw simple conclusions about sermons in Dearborn.

Furthermore, not all sermons are delivered in Arabic. Many are in English. So it is important to compare the messages of the English and Arabic sermons.

The Speeches

The theme most commonly dwelt on in the sermons from the mosques (whether given in Arabic or English) is undoubtedly that of Shi'ism itself. That is, those signs and symbols that are peculiar to Shi'ism are what are stressed during sermons. The Imams 'Alī, Ḥusayn and the other Imams and the Prophet's daughter Fāṭima and granddaughter Zaynab are either the main theme or are alluded to regularly in a sermon. These heroes and heroines are the models for one's life. The following are some examples of the types of statements made:

Imam 'Alī was born in the *Ka'aba* itself and this was a wonderful sign.

'Alī is an example to the Weak.

'Alī is a mystery and a miracle.

Muḥammad called Ḥusayn a nation among nations.

Anybody who wants to do revolution must learn in the school of Ḥusayn.

If you want to be saved, you must believe in Ḥassan and Ḥusayn.

Fāṭima Zahrā' was the best creature, the best lady. You find women today who have learned from her. The [Muslim] women today are proof of the greatness of Fāṭima.

No other theme is repeated as often as this. There is the continual reminder that these central figures serve as models for the Shi'a of today as they have for hundreds of years.

Interestingly, there is never any "interpreting" of their characters into modern day situations. Their attributes are listed, legends about them retold. But never have I heard a shaykh or any other speaker suggest trying to see,

⁷ Richard Antoun, *Muslim Preacher in the Modern World* (Princeton. Princeton University Press), p. 83.

say, Imam Ḥusayn in the light of a 20th Century dilemma. Interestingly, Ḥusayn is both portrayed as a model of "patience" and "of revolution." It is left to the listener to interpret what Ḥusayn means in modern life for himself. The same holds for Fāṭima or Zaynab. These are good and virtuous women. They are both models of womanhood as they displayed courage and also stood behind their men through adversity. They are portrayed as multi-faceted: they are both mothers and wives and women who have stepped outside of their family role to do heroic acts. It is left up to the listener to decide which aspect of the heroine's life to emulate.

Reverence for and belief in, the Qurʾān, the Prophet and the family of the Prophet (the *ahl al-bayt*) are common threads that weave together this community. All three mosques reinforce this common identity. There is no distinction or dispute at this level. Whether a sermon is delivered in Arabic or English, the theme of the *ahl al-bayt* prevails.

Furthermore, the "oppressors" of the Shīʿa continue to be the Umayyads. Only rarely does a speaker venture out of the historical realm of the early days of Islam to make his point. Occasionally Israel is mentioned as being an enemy of Islam. But it is usually not railed against as the main theme of a speech.

There are references made to the Sunnis on occasion as well. These differ from other topics that are discussed in that they are in response to perceived recent attacks on the Shīʿa. The killing of Shīʿites in Mecca and a negative article in an Egyptian magazine regarding Shīʿism provoked two of these sermons. But these are rare occurrences.

Differences Among Arabic Speakers

The differences that occur in sermons among the three Arabic speaking preachers of the mosques are generally quite subtle. As stated before, all three use highly stylized presentations, never deviating from the use of standard Arabic. However, even within the narrow range allowed, there are variations in style of speech.

It is commonplace in this community to hear people speak of one mosque being aligned with a certain Lebanese militia and another with an opposing militia. Yet, one would be hard pressed to prove this by the "surface" content of the speeches. Shaykhs do not refer to political groups during their sermons. Particular political figures are not mentioned. However, religious leaders who may also be considered political leaders may be alluded to but always in the context in which there is general agreement. For example, Khomeini is seen as a hero to the Shīʿa because he strengthened the identity of the believers and gave them a new sense of pride. He is not spoken of as the proponent of *Hizb Allah*. Mūsa Ṣadr is also one who brought people "out of materialism and

taught them the true Islam." His role as creator of *Ama'* for a general audience, will be ignored.

Only when a political group has organized an event at the mosques and that event is known to be a political one, will there be references to the appropriate political organization. For example, at the Islamic Center there was a memorial for the disappearance of Mūsa Ṣadr. It was held in the evening and announced well in advance. At this event posters and flags associated with the *Ama'* movement were displayed throughout the mosque and only those sympathetic to *Ama'* were in attendance. Posters and other insignia of *Ama'* would not appear at the Sunday service even if the topic of a sermon was Mūsa Ṣadr. Instead, there would have been a sermon that most could agree on: Mūsa Ṣadr attempted to help the Shī'a improve their material and spiritual condition.

During sermons the preachers are not denigrating one another. Each mosque functions quite separately. The leadership of one mosque might heartily disapprove of the actions of another, but each mosque is quite cautious about causing open splits in the community.

Still there are differences in the sermons of the preachers that are well worth examining. The most extreme differences can be found when comparing the speeches of Shaykh Attat (who is known to sympathize with *Ama'*) at the *Jāmi'* and Shaykh Burro (a *Hizb Allah* sympathizer) at the *Majlis*. Again, these two shaykhs speak only in Arabic.

Both Attat and Burro have given sermons on Islamic ethics. Shaykh Burro begins his talks with rhymed prose and then launches into a highly abstract, intellectual speech on the different levels of ethical systems. It is a speech that would appeal to a college educated, religiously studious sort of audience. Shaykh Attat's handling of the subject is quite different in terms of its intellectual level. Not so abstract and learned, he uses simpler ideas. His is less the seminary lecture and more the "Sunday church sermon."

While such differences may of course reflect basic personality styles, they also reflect different views of Islam and how it should be applied. In other words, political views.

Shaykh Burro follows the style of the great *madrassas* of the Shī'i world. He aspires to be learned and noted for his learnedness. He expects the people to come to him. The fact that only those who wish to emulate this very learned approach to Islam would do so, does not seem to concern him. Shaykh Burro has even introduced the concept of *ʿIrān* in his sermons. *ʿIrān* is part of mystical philosophy. It is a system that gives an esoteric explanation of the exoteric features of Islam.

Mottehede states that *ʿIrān* was instrumental in creating the political style of Ayatollah Khomeini,

the very heart of *erfan* [*ʿirfān*] is the destruction of the distinction between subject and object—an experience of this world in which seer and seen are one. And teachers of *erfan* [*ʿirfān*] seek to impart to their students a sense of the fearlessness toward everything external, including all the seemingly coercive political powers of the world, which true masters of *ʿirfān* should have.⁸

A young scholarly Iraqi friend of mine has sat through many hours of Shaykh Burro's sermons. He rejects the idea that there is a political aspect to his sermons on *ʿirfān*, but on the other hand, believes that such sermons in this community are inappropriate because the Lebanese do not have the proper religious training to understand such concepts. He expressed irritation, in fact, that the ideas of *ʿirfān* were being totally misunderstood by the Lebanese youth. He claimed they were thinking of themselves as enlightened mystics after a couple of lectures on the subject.

It is almost inconceivable that Shaykh Attat would address his audience about mysticism. In his speeches and his demeanor he is a man of the people. Not at all esoteric in his approach to religion, he is very much the proletariat shaykh. More dramatic and less intellectual in his approach, he indicates a concern to appeal to the majority of the Muslims, rather than to a select group. His is not the seminary approach. His behavior is most definitely modeled after the activist Mūsa Ṣadr who presented himself as a man of the people. Shaykh Attat is also the only preacher who differentiates the Sunday (or regular) sermon from that given at a social occasion. For example, at wedding engagements at the *Jāmiʿ* he interjects humor, and both he and the audience laugh quite heartily. At such an occasion, he persuaded a few of the women who had not covered their hair to do so by speaking in a joking manner about the subject.

Shaykh Berri is seen as someone "in between" the other two. Eloquent and poetical, he speaks with invariable calm. He is remote without being aloof. His sermons, while completely within the world of Shīʿī topics and ideology, address issues that concern the every day lives of a majority of Muslims: prayer, marriage, pilgrimage. Rarely are concrete examples or personal references given, something lacking in sermons from all the *ʿulamāʾ*. But on one occasion he did allude to his own pilgrimage and how he happened to be able to become a *ḥajjī*. This was alluded to, not dwelt upon. The spiritual significance of the *ḥajj* was what was important. Shaykh Berri is very culturally oriented. He loves poetry and language and is a bit more open to seeing Shīʿism as a contribution to world culture than is normally found in this community. As Fischer would put it, he is at least partially post-Hegelian. In Dearborn he appears to stand alone in this respect.

⁸ Mottehedeh, *op. cit.*, p 183

Analysis of the Speeches Given in Arabic

The purpose of the Arabic sermons delivered in the local mosques is to convey the truth. It is not to challenge the people's thinking about the role of Islam in America. It is not to attempt to modernize Islam for a new and different environment. It is not to make Islam "relevant." The purpose is to remind people of the essential verities of Islam: Muḥammad was the Messenger of the One True God, Imam ʿAlī was his rightful successor, the Imam Ḥusayn suffered cruelly at the hands of the Umayyad oppressors, and other designated members of the *ahl al-bayt* are to be emulated and revered. Thus far, the results corroborate Bloch's theory.

However, even within the very narrow constraints offered by the formalized speeches given in Arabic, one can find significant variations in the message that is conveyed. Generally speaking, the message from the three mosques is essentially the same, but the listener is being compelled to respond in a different manner, depending on which shaykh is conveying the message. None of the shaykhs are coming up with new or innovative approaches to Islam. They are all reiterating what they have learned from their teachers at the *madrassas*. Yet, Burro's highly intellectualized speech on ethics conveys a different message than Shaykh Attat's more homely variation on the same theme. And by introducing a topic such as *ʿirfān*, Shaykh Burro is subtly making the statement that the people should approach Islam in such a way as to drastically differentiate themselves from the rest of society.

All three shaykhs stay within "pure" Shīʿī theology. All utilize formalized speech acts to convey their message. Yet, through emphasis on particular subjects and through demeanor, they are quite capable of imparting messages so different that they could cause major rifts in the community should that community allow them to do so.

The Audience's Reaction

Bloch claims that the formalized speech act reinforces the hierarchical nature of the relationship between the speaker and the hearer, "... ultimately the power of formalized oratory does not simply spring from its form, it springs from the forces of social power."⁹ The relationship between clergy and laymen in the Middle East is very complex. The clergy are an inextricable part of life and indeed have had power throughout the ages. Among the Shīʿa this power has either generated from the State as it did in, say, Safavid times, or from the people as in the 1979 Iranian Revolution. But the Shīʿa rank and file have generally shown a certain independent-mindedness about their clergy,

⁹ Bloch, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

who are commonly the butt of jokes and derisive stories. Of course, they can also be devoutly revered. In this community the feelings towards the clergy run the entire gamut.

Results from questions I posed to people regarding the clergy suggests that the vast majority see these men purely as religious specialists who have expertise in theological matters, much the same way as any other professional specialists. Most said that they would turn to the shaykh for a purely religious matter such as prayer or fasting but would not bring other matters to him. The shaykh is seen as a person with a job and that is to remind the people of the truths of Shi'ism and assist them with following the correct spiritual path.

Actually, there is much inattentiveness to speeches at the mosques. At the *Majma'* and the *Jāmi'* there is nearly as much visiting among the audience during sermons as there is during a dinner. At the *Majlis*, the situation is a bit different. There the room is usually arranged so that chairs are lined up side by side so that less visiting can occur. However, even at the *Majlis*, when the people, particularly the women, are sitting at tables, they are likely to talk among themselves during sermons.

In general, it is not expected that the shaykh will say something revolutionary. What he says the audience has, in one form or another, heard before. There are no interchanges between speaker and hearer except when the audience reiterates the blessing of the Prophet and his family. On some occasions, when the shaykh is addressing a small group of men, at the end of the speech, he will allow questions to which he gives lengthy answers. This is commonly found at the *Majma'* and the *Majlis*. But this is again very formalized and the questions are expected to be concise and non-challenging.

The audience does not complain, nor do they suggest that the speeches be shorter or that the format be changed to allow more participation. The shaykh is doing what he is hired to do: remind people of the fundamentals of their religion. Consequently, subtle differences of style are generally of little consequence. Nor does it matter particularly that the sermon is delivered in a form of Arabic that may not be totally comprehensible to the listeners.¹⁰ The general idea is grasped and that is sufficient.

Not all clergy can, of course, accept this attitude from their audience. Shaykh Burro, who began his career in America at the *Jāmi'*, was obviously not content with what he would have seen as fulfilling a functionary's role. He resorted to opening the doors of a new mosque in which he could have complete control, albeit one with a very small and narrow congregation. Shaykh Berri also opened a new mosque but has attempted to appeal to a larger number

¹⁰ For a discussion of the use of Arabic in the mosques, see my article "Arabic in the Dearborn Mosques" in Aleya Rouchdy, in *The Arabic Language in America*. (Detroit: Wayne State University, 1992).

of his countrymen and has been quite successful. I believe it is because he has been more willing to accept his people as they are than has Shaykh Burro.

The majority of people in Dearborn are not willing to allow the shaykhs to play a divisive role. They do not want a community split along strong ideological lines. It is as if, then, that the aspects of sermons that could be divisive are simply not heard by the majority of people in the community.

Sermons Presented in English: Shaykh Chirri's Sermons

Shaykh Chirri came to America long before the other shaykhs currently residing in Dearborn. Consequently, he found a totally different community with a different set of needs than Shaykhs Attat, Berri and Burro found upon their arrivals. A shaykh was needed in Chirri's time who was knowledgeable in Islam but able to relate to the problems of a people for whom the Arabic language and Middle Eastern traditions were rapidly being supplanted by all things American, including the English language for Arabic. The people wanted a preacher who could communicate in their new language. It is important to understand the significance of this. Some clergy would have flatly refused to relinquish the use of the Qur'anic language to discuss religion. Indeed, today some clergy in the United States (though not in Dearborn) have rejected the idea of learning English as it is considered the language of the *Kuffār* (the infidel). Shaykh Chirri realized that if Islam was to flourish (or even remain alive at all) it was incumbent upon him to speak the vernacular.

It is only possible to determine the types of speeches given by Shaykh Chirri during the last two or three years before his retirement, which may have been affected by the changes occurring in the Middle East and the arrival of the new clergy. However, according to informants, there are certain topics that have always been dear to his heart and it is unlikely that the general pattern of speech has changed over time.

Shaykh Chirri begins his sermons with the first *sūrah* of the Qur'ān in Arabic, then proceeds to address the "ladies and gentlemen" of the audience in English. His English is unpolished. He drops the final consonant of a word, giving his speech an uneducated quality. It is apparent that he learned English principally to communicate with a second and third generation Arabic community, though he also has written religious texts explaining Islam and Shi'ism to a non-Muslim audience. Still, the utilitarian approach to language appears even in his writing style. For Shaykh Chirri, it is the message, not its means of conveyance, that is of greatest import. There is nothing poetical in his presentations. He wants his listeners to know that there is "only one Almighty God who is the Creator of the universe." He tells the Muslims that they should be grateful to have been blessed with eyes and ears and to be the ones chosen to follow God's message for this day. He admonishes

the people to follow the teachings of Islam, using the Imams and Fāṭima as exemplars to emulate. He is also fond of referring to the Patriarch Abraham who "was not like other Jews" and obeyed the Almighty God. But it is through the message of Islam that one receives salvation. Certainly, one of his favorite topics is that of the return of the Imam Mahdi. This subject stirs him to some excitement and I have heard him insist that the congregation, noisily chattering at their tables, listen to him because he feels strongly that they will have to recognize the Mahdi when he appears in the not too distant future. They must be prepared.

In comparison with the sermons of the other shaykhs, Shaykh Chirri's speeches do not qualify as "formal" speeches. There is not the rigor of style. There is more variation in volume and intonation. Yet little else is truly different from the other shaykhs. The scriptures are essentially the only thing invoked. The truths of Shī'ism are reiterated. Even in the forceful and direct appeals to the people to heed his word, there is never any variation from the standard discourse on Islam. It is all within the bounds of Shī'ī theology and never deviates from that level.

The greatest difference between the sermons of Chirri and the three Arabic speaking shaykhs concerns the issue of teaching the faith to non-Muslims. Proselytizing for Islam is not a common theme of any of their sermons, yet Shaykh Chirri is more inclined to refer to this topic than are the other *ʿālim*. In one sermon he instructed his audience on how to teach Islam. "Be friendly, say good morning," he advised. Then, he urged them, "turn the conversation to religion." They are to tell the Christians that there is only one God, that Jesus and Mary are not gods. Mary, he said, was a great lady, but not a god.

What is so striking about such a sermon is that Shaykh Chirri has continued to see America throughout these years only in theological terms. To him America is Christian and the major difference, then, between Christian and Muslim perspective lies in the question of Christ. Shaykh Chirri does not discuss the fact that Americans may see that Islam's forbidding of drugs and alcohol could have beneficial effects for a society suffering from the ills of substance abuse. Steps are not taken to begin a teaching campaign based on the social principles of Islam. (The fact that the other shaykhs are not stressing the teaching of Islam to non-Muslims suggests that they perceive Islam as being so tied to Middle Eastern culture that it would be nearly impossible to bridge the gulf that exists between East and West.)

How does this relate to Bloch's theory about the effects of formal speech? As stated previously, there is limited use of formality in Chirri's speeches, yet, he still seems to operate under the constraints of formalized speech in that he avoids divisive or controversial ideas and maintains his distinct and hierarchical role *vis-à-vis* his audience.

What this suggests, then, is that it is not the style of speech *per se* that sets the limits and the type of relationship that exists between speaker and hearer. It is rather the entire tradition of clerical training that most defines what message will be conveyed. The Shī'ī *ʿālim* is trained in a certain school of thought. His traditional education in law, logic, philosophy, etc. 'compels' him to think in a certain way. The style of speech used only reinforces the message. It does not define it.

A Layman's Approach

Even before Shaykh Chirri's retirement, it became increasingly difficult for him to make sermons. For the most part, it has fallen on one of the members of the Center's Board of Directors, Ḥajj C., to deliver the English sermon, as Shaykh Attat has not mastered English. The *ʿālim* does not wish to cater only to new immigrants but to also include those who have grown up in America and who are more comfortable in English. To someone like Ḥajj C., and to others as well, English should be spoken in the mosque as this is an American mosque.

Ḥajj C. is a second generation immigrant and a man who might be described as a Muslim evangelist. His messages are direct. He admonishes his audience to be good Muslims, not by habit, but by conscious decision. He wants the Muslims to set a good example for the larger community. Rather than accepting the socializing that goes on during sermons, he tells his audience to observe silence when the words of the Qurʾān are being read. In other words, he wishes them not to take the words for granted, or treat them like they are magical (my concept), but listen to them for the content and live by them. He refers to the scriptures but also will refer to actual, recent happenings to make his points. He grapples with the Sunni/Shī'ī split, explaining that there are political, not religious, differences between the two sects. More importantly, he gives a specific example of how the split could be down played. He alluded to an occasion when Sunnis came to visit the *ʿālim*. The call for prayer being sounded, the men went to pray in the prayer chamber. One of the Shī'ī men present began to pass out prayer stones (the pieces of clay from *Karbala'*) and Ḥajj C. asked that this not be done so as to avoid offending their Sunni guests. Avoiding the use of the prayer stone for many Shī'ā would be a controversial act, discussion of which would not normally be included in a sermon. But this lay teacher, although not trained in Najaf, is a man with a message that goes beyond the usual Shī'ī theological subjects.

Ḥajj C. does not conform to the formal speech acts of the highly stylized sermons of the Arabic speaking shaykhs. He goes outside the usual domain of what is usually considered an appropriate subject matter and an appropriate

style for a mosque sermon (his English is quite correct and he is a very articulate and fine speaker).

That being said, however, the deviation, when scrutinized, is really not so very great. Hajj C. ultimately gives the same message that the other shaykhs do: that Shī'ism contains the truth. He expands this to include the need to find ways to share this truth with others. For him, conservative, card-carrying Republican that he is, the ultimate goal is that as many people as possible be prepared for the return of the Imam Mahdi and the Judgment Day. He does not advocate any relaxation in the practice of Islamic law to fit American society. His ventures into ecumenism are still limited. It is one thing not to display prayer stones in the presence of Sunnis. It is quite another not to hold observances for the anniversaries of the family of the Prophet. While Hajj C. is not grounded in the traditional education of Najaf, he is firmly grounded in the teachings of Shī'ism and, as such, any controversy his speeches might generate will be fairly mild. Though the sermons he delivers do not have the highly stylized form of the Arabic speaking shaykhs or reflect the style of *madrassa* education, Hajj C. still operates within the confines of his religious tradition, something that has not been greatly affected by his American upbringing.

Summary and Conclusions

The shaykhs, particularly the Arabic speaking ones, use a highly stylized way to deliver their ideas. While they do not differ greatly in their messages, the subtleties in deliverance and emphasis do make for distinctive differences in their approaches to the practice of Islam.

On the surface, Shaykh Chirri in his English sermons, and particularly Hajj C., a layman, present quite different types of sermons. Shaykh Chirri's sermons are not as stylized and he does on occasion make emotional appeals to the people to listen to his message and be prepared for the final days. Hajj C. even ventures outside of the use of scriptures and introduces mildly controversial topics in his sermons.

The differences in style and message could have enormous effects on this community if the community allowed this to occur. For the most part, however, the audience downplays the differences of the various speakers (although there are certainly exceptions). Partially this is accomplished by simply ignoring much of what is said. It is also done by a conscious decision made by many of the people in this community not to have major divisions. Thus, for many the choice is either to attend no mosque functions or to attend those at more than one mosque.

Yet, for all the differences found, the sermons, whether delivered by Arabic speaking shaykhs, by an English speaking shaykh, or a lay speaker, contain the same essential message: Shī'ism is the true religion and it is through

Shī'ism and its heroes that one shall be saved in the last days. It is this message that the people hear.

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KARBALĀ' MADE IMMEDIATE: THE MARTYR AS MODEL IN IMĀMĪ SHĪ'ISM

In the scholarly fecund area of Imāmi Shī'ite Islāmī, one important subject that has previously received scant attention is the figures of the *shuhadā-yi mu'addad* (enumerated martyrs). In the formal sense a *shahīd* (martyr) is one who has died while performing *jihād*, or as it is commonly referred to, "Holy War." However, *jihād* has been one of the more misinterpreted and misunderstood terms in Islām. As A. Ezzati has stated,

Most non-Muslim scholars, intentionally or unintentionally, have defined *jihād* as only the Holy War, and thus have understood neither *jihād* nor *shahāda* [martyrdom]. The Muslims, mostly taking into consideration the martyrs of the early days of Islamic history, define martyrdom in terms of the fatalistic death of those dear to Allāh and do not see the close link between continuous struggle in the cause of Allāh (*jihād*) and martyrdom.¹

Jihād, going back to its etymological significance, entails striving or effort. This, of course, may include striving or effort within the sphere of Holy War for the explicit purpose of promulgating or defending Islām. But, *jihād* has come to mean more than just this. It also may entail, as E. Tyan puts it,

... an effort directed upon oneself for the attainment of moral and religious perfection. Certain writers, particularly among those of the Shī'ite persuasion, qualify this *djihad* [*jihād*] as "spiritual *djihad*" and as "the greater *djihad*," in opposition to the *djihad* which ... is called "physical *djihad*" or "the lesser *djihad*."²

The idea of "spiritual *jihād*" is even found in the writing of the Sūfī apologist Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (1058-1111), who states,

Every one who gives himself wholly to God ... in the war against his own desires (*nafs*), is a martyr when he meets death going forward without turning his back.³

On the popular level, the criteria for martyrdom in Islām have been looser. In part this may be due to a more permissive attitude toward what activities fall

¹ A. Ezzati, "The Concept of Martyrdom in Islām," *Al-Serāṭ*, 12.1 (1986): 118.

² E. Tyan, "*djihad*," EI².

³ As quoted in A. J. Wensinck, "The Oriental Doctrine of the Martyrs," *Verslagen en Mededeelingen der Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen Afdeling Letterkunde* 53 (1923): 155.

within the category of *jihād*. For instance, women are precluded from participating in *jihād* when it falls within the sphere of Holy War. So, at least one *ḥadīth* (Prophetic Tradition) indicates that the *Ḥajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca) is an acceptable substitute for women.⁴ This allowance seems to have come to include men as well. The redoubtable Sir Richard F. Burton (1821–1890) witnessed some men who expired while performing the *Ḥajj* and he notes that, "Those who die on a pilgrimage become martyrs."⁵ This was apparently a popular belief in mid-19th century Arabia. Jaffur Shurreef gives a much more liberal list of the criteria for martyrdom,

1. If a man expire[s] in the act of reading the *Qoran* [Qur'ān]; 2. if in the act of praying; 3. if in the act of fasting; 4. if on the pilgrimage to Mecca; if on a Friday. . . ; 6. if in the defence of his religion; 7. if through religious meditation; 8. if he be executed for speaking the truth; 9. if he endure[s] death by the hands of a tyrant or oppressor with patience and submission; 10. if killed in defending his won property; 11. if a woman die[s] in labour or child-bed; 12. if murdered by robber; 13. if devoured by tigers; 14. if killed by the kick of a horse; 15. if struck dead by lightning; 16. if burnt to death; 17. if buried under the ruins of a wall; 18. if drowned; 19. if killed by a fall from a precipice, or down a dry well or pit; 20. if he meet[s] death by apoplexy, or a stroke of the sun.⁶

Martyrdom, *shahāda*, does have a deeper significance than what might be indicated in the above exposition. Ezzati looks back to the original verbal root of *shahāda* to extrapolate what he feels is the ultimate significance of the *shahīd*,

The word *shahāda* is derived from the Arabic verbal root *shāhada*, which means to 'see', to 'witness', to 'testify', to 'become a model and paradigm'. *Shahāda* therefore literally means to 'see', to 'witness', and 'to become a model'. A *shahīd* is the person who sees and witnesses, and he is therefore the witness, as if the martyr witnesses and sees the truth physically and thus stands by it firmly, so much so that not only does he testify it verbally, but he is prepared to struggle and fight and give up his life for the truth, and thus become a martyr. In this way, and by his struggle and sacrifice for the sake of the truth, he becomes a model, a paradigm, and an example for others, worthy of being copied, and worthy of being followed.⁷

In Shī'ite Islam the *shahīd* as model or paradigm finds its ultimate expression in the figure of Imām Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī, commonly referred to as *Sayyid al-Shuhadā'* (Prince of the Martyrs). The Shī'ite ethos is shaped by the suffer-

⁴ Wensinck 154.

⁵ Sir Richard F. Burton, *Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to al-Madinah and Meccah* vol 2. (London: Tylston and Edwards, 1893) 183, note 2.

⁶ Jaffur Shurreef, *Qanoon-E-Islam*, trans. G. A. Herklots, (London: Parbury, Allen and Co., 1832) 71–72.

⁷ Ezzati 119.

ing and martyrdom of Ḥusayn on the battlefield of Karbalā' while facing a numerically superior Umayyad force in 41/680. Imām Ḥusayn's martyrdom is especially paradigmatic when taking into account his staunch idealism in rejecting the perceived disregard for Islam by the Umayyad rulers of the time. The traditional Shī'ite view is that Ḥusayn's selfless concern for Islam and filial piety led him to place himself and his companions into a situation that would result in their deaths.⁸ As Mahmoud Ayoub puts it,

... the death of Ḥusayn has been regarded as a sacrifice in the struggle (*jihād*) in the way of God for the right against wrong, for justice and truth against wrongdoing and falsehood.⁹

Coupled to the paradigmatic aspect of Ḥusayn's martyrdom is its soteriological significance in the Shī'ite ethos. Peter Chelkowski explains,

The tragedy of Karbalā' is viewed by the Shī'a as the greatest suffering and redemptive act in history. Actually it transcends history into meta-history, having acquired cosmic proportions.¹⁰

Imām Ḥusayn's selfless act has come to be seen as preordained; adding to its sacrificial nature. It is redemptive in that the reiteration of Ḥusayn's suffering and martyrdom during *majālīs* (commemorative assemblies), *ta'ziyāh* (passion plays), and other ceremonies of Muḥarram call for his intercession on the Day of Judgement.

Thus, in Shī'ite Islam, martyrdom has a cosmic, soteriological sense as all martyrs become part of a sacred history that has as its central event the martyrdom of Imām Ḥusayn. The model or paradigm of Imām Ḥusayn as martyr *par excellence* in turn influences, shapes, and even supersedes all those martyrs proceeding him.

As indicated above, martyrdom has as its ultimate criterion the sacrificing of one's life while promulgating or defending Islam (*jihād*). Shī'ite Islam does not restrict *jihād* to physical conflict alone. *Jihād* may be done through polemic. All the enumerated martyrs have a common background of Shī'ite polemical writing that ultimately resulted in their execution or assassination at the hands of their enemies. This leads Muḥammad Taqī 'Alī 'Ābidī to conclude,

... the only difference is that those who were martyred due to their writings receive high rank; not only because of their very martyrdom but also due to their positions as scholars and proselytizers of the Truth.

⁸ I refer the reader to S.H.M. Jafri's polemic, *The Origins and Early Development of Shi'a Islam*, (London: Longman, 1979) for a thorough study of the events leading up to Ḥusayn's martyrdom.

⁹ Mahmoud Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering in Islam*, (The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1978) 141.

¹⁰ Peter Chelkowski, "Popular Shī'i Mourning Rituals," *Al-Serāt*, 12.1 (1986): 209.

Perhaps for this reason they received the designations First, Second, Third, and so on.¹¹

There is, however, no universal list of these enumerated martyrs to be found. That is to say, all those who are accepted as enumerated martyrs in the Middle East (Iran, Iraq, etc.) are not accepted as enumerated martyrs in South Asia and visa versa. In his work *Shahīdān-i Rāh-i Fazīlat* (Tehran, 1943), 'Allāmah 'Abdulḥusain Amīnī Najafī gives biographies of 132 Shī'ite religious scholars who were martyred. Out of these the following are chronologically enumerated:

1. *Shahīd-i Awwal* (The First Martyr): Shamsuddīn Abū 'Abdullah Muḥammad ibn Makki al-Āmilī al-Jizzīnī (d. 1384)
2. *Shahīd-i Sānī* (The Second Martyr): Zaynuddīn ibn 'Alī al-Āmilī al-Jabā'ī (d. 1558)
3. *Shahīd-i Sālīs* (The Third Martyr): Shahābuddīn Tūstarī Khurāsānī (d. 1588-9)
4. *Shahīd-i Rābi'* (The Fourth Martyr) Muḥammad Mahdī Isfahānī (d. 1802-3) Or: Muḥammad Taqī Barghānī Qazwīnī (d. 1847-8)

The latter, according to 'Allāmah 'Abdulḥusain, is sometimes considered to be *Shahīd-i Sālīs*. According to S.A.A. Rizvi, this is corroborated by Muḥammad ibn 'Alī al-Tunikābunī in his *Qisās al-'Ulamā'* (Tehran, 1896).¹²

Muḥammad Taqī 'Alī 'Ābidī presents those martyrs who are accepted in South Asia. Interestingly the list diverges after the above first two martyrs. The following individuals are accepted as enumerated martyrs after them:

3. *Shahīd-i Sālīs*: Qāzī Nūru'llāh Shūstarī (d. 1610)
4. *Shahīd-i Rābi'*: Ḥakīm Muḥammad Kāmil (d. 1819)
5. *Shahīd-i Khāmis* (The Fifth Martyr): Ayatullāh Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ṣādr (d. 1980)¹³

A simple explanation for the differences in these lists might be that the particular author of whatever biographical compendium has selected and numbered certain martyrs as such. Over time his particular enumeration of martyrs is accepted on the popular level. However, this explanation proves inadequate in resolving the differences in the Shī'ite world over who should be the Third and subsequent enumerated martyrs. This explanation also proves inadequate in indicating why there is no consensus among the Middle East-

¹¹ Muḥammad Taqī 'Alī 'Ābidī, "Shahīd-i Sālīs Qāzī Nūru'llāh Shūstarī," *al-Wāqif* 63 3 (1986): 29-33.

¹² S. A. A. Rizvi, *A Socio-Intellectual History of the Ismā'īlī Asharī Shī'īs in India*. (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt Ltd, 1986) 1: 342, note 1.

¹³ I also will note that in 1989 there was discussion among Shī'ite scholars in Lucknow, India, about the possibility of Mahdī al-Ḥakīm Tabāṭabā'ī (d. 1988) assuming the position of *Shahīd-i Sādīs* (The Sixth Martyr).

ern Shī'ites about who should be the third and fourth martyrs while their South Asian co-religionists are all in agreement about which martyrs are enumerated. Also, this explanation does not answer the question as to why South Asian Shī'ites continue to enumerate martyrs and Middle Eastern Shī'ites do not. I propose that the enumerated martyrs offer a particular paradigmatic model to the Shī'ite Muslims of South Asia; all the richer and more immediate when a Martyr's shrine is local, as is the case of *Shahīd-i Ṣāliḥ* Qāzī Nūru'llāh Shūstārī (buried in Agra). The enumerated martyrs are to be seen as pious individuals who devoted their lives to scholarship and the advocacy of the universal truth of Shī'ite Islam despite the dangers they faced in an environment hostile to such ideas. In the end they made the ultimate sacrifice of their lives. This paradigm is of value for the South Asian Shī'ite community who perceive themselves as a beleaguered religious minority both in Pakistan and in India; their ethos akin to that of the Shī'ite Muslim community throughout much of their history. More importantly, such a paradigm has soteriological benefit when the martyr is seen as a "model" of Imām Ḥusayn and so ritually remembered.

In this article I shall focus on the development of Qāzī Nūru'llāh Shūstārī as *Shahīd-i Ṣāliḥ*. I will show that his designation as *Shahīd-i Ṣāliḥ* was not simply an insular, conscious fixing of a formalized symbol upon an individual whose historical profile fits the criteria demanded by the symbol. I submit that his designation was, and is, a part of an ongoing, complex process that has at its core the perception and utilization of a multivalent symbol, with its ancillary rituals, by the Shī'ite community of South Asia. In other words, they see Qāzī Nūru'llāh Shūstārī as a "model" of Imām Ḥusayn.

What does "model" mean in the above context? The answer to this question may be found in an article which utilizes a unique phenomenological methodology: Earle H. Waugh's "The Popular Muhammad: Models in the Interpretation of an Islamic Paradigm."¹⁴ In this work, Waugh discusses the pitfalls of applying phenomenological methodologies, especially to the subject of Islam. Waugh sees two basic problems that have occurred; both arising from the tendency by many phenomenologists of religions to compile observed phenomena and extract coherent structures with the intention of presenting some of the inner dynamics of the faiths studied. The first problem is that the phenomena that the scholar may have observed and compiled may not be considered truly representative or "orthoprax," if you will, by an individual professing the faith. This, Waugh feels, has led to a reluctance by some scholars to apply such history of religions methodologies to the nominally orthoprax faith of Islam.

¹⁴ In Richard C. Martin, ed. *Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies* (Tucson. The University of Arizona Press, 1985) 41-58.

The second problem with this variety of history of religions methodology is that, as Waugh has it, the patterns discerned by the historian of religion appear to say more about the abstracting abilities of the scholar than they do about the faith itself.

Waugh suggests a solution to the above outlined problems. Instead of extracting coherent structures from observed phenomena, he feels that the historian of religions could instead choose models as the locus of investigation. He indicates that such a methodology is much more applicable to Islam, a faith that has undergone much structural change, not the least of which can be exemplified in the great differences in the Sunni versus Shī'ite ethos. I understand Waugh's perception of a model to be an archetypical frame of reference. He states:

Models . . . are not just imaginary perceptions brought to bear upon unsuspecting data, but insights into the true nature of things which, though they may appear to contradict what is normally held to be true, say something meaningful about the reality from which they arise.¹⁵

Models are then, in his estimate, images of a religious reality that, due to their nature, have a potential to elicit a response from a follower of a particular religious tradition. This may surmount the problems inherent in extracting coherent structures from religious reality.

In his article, Waugh juxtaposes the term 'paradigm' with the term 'model.' The relationship between these two expressions are to be found in his statement,

At the very least the paradigms, those crucial elements of a belief system, are altered in content or in relation to one another within the system.¹⁶

What I gather from this is that a model may be developed from a paradigm. This clarifies the emphasis he puts on the model as an image of religious reality; an image that is alterable. It might become even more clear if the phrase 'paradigmatic model' was used in the context of the model theory that Waugh proposes, keeping in mind that the paradigmatic model is an image created by a follower of a religious tradition.

Waugh applies his model theory to the popular image of the Prophet Muḥammad's life as it has been portrayed at various points in history. This has proved to be extremely edifying for me in regard to approaching the subject of this thesis. Waugh shows how a historical figure (the Prophet Muḥammad) is seen to offer a paradigm to a believing community. An important feature of the paradigmatic model that Waugh identifies is its ability to evolve

¹⁵ Waugh 45.

¹⁶ Waugh 47.

as the community evolves in history, facing new challenges that require the Muslim community to reevaluate its religious resources. This methodology is extremely useful in an attempt to explain the ways in which Qāzī Nūru'llāh Shūstārī has been transformed into *Shahīd-i Sālis*, modeled on Imām Ḥusayn. This transformation of Qāzī Nūru'llāh into the paradigmatic *Shahīd-i Sālis* may be found in the sacralization of Qāzī Nūru'llāh and his grave, the accounts of miracles which have occurred at the *Mazār-i Shahīd-i Sālis* (Shrine of the Third Martyr, Qāzī Nūru'llāh Shūstārī), as well as the soteriology of *ziyārat* (visitation) to this shrine. All this has been accomplished through a number of hagiographies of *Shahīd-i Sālis*.

It should be stressed that the mere application of the epithet *Shahīd-i Sāli* was not enough to insure the sacralization of Qāzī Nūru'llāh and his shrine. It was necessary to prove that the individual buried at the *Mazār-i Shahīd-i Sālis* was an exemplary martyr and thus deserves attention. Therefore it is hardly a coincidence that with the increase in projects to develop and improve the shrine and its environs in the first four decades of this century, there was also a plethora of hagiographies of Qāzī Nūru'llāh being produced. These hagiographies served to popularize Qāzī Nūru'llāh by sanctifying his life and demonstrating why he was enumerated over others who fall in the general category of martyrs. They also may well have served as a form of advertising the *Mazār-i Shahīd-i Sālis*. Whether some of these hagiographies were commissioned by those in charge of the shrine is open to conjecture. It is known that the author of *Shahīd-i Sālis*, Muḥammad Hādī 'Azīz, was an intimate of the shrine's first *sarparast*, Nāṣir Ḥusayn, and the latter wrote a laudative preface to the 1935 edition of this work.¹⁷ It cannot be argued that Āl-i 'Abā Jāfrī's *Yādgar-i Nūr* also served to advertise the planned program of the newly created *Anjuman-i Yādgar-i Shahīd-i Sālis* (Memorial Society of the Third Martyr).¹⁸

The sacralization of *Shahīd-i Sālis* Qāzī Nūru'llāh Shūstārī was accomplished in several ways. One was to present a pious history in which Qāzī Nūru'llāh was a selfless and effective defender of Shī'ite Islam in the face of great dangers. An example of this is to be found in the short work *Shaheed-e Sālis* distributed by the Peermahomed Ebrahim Trust. The anonymous author of this hagiography offers an embellished account of Qāzī Nūru'llāh Shūstārī's migration to India in response to a threat to Islam in the Mughal Emperor Akbar's court,

The religious fancies of Akbar and the intrigues of bigots had puzzled the true lovers of religion. A dark future was lurking for Islam. None could dare to revert or prevent Akbar from these orgies. . . . The only person who took a positive step towards alleviating this pain was Hakim Abul

¹⁷ See Muḥammad Hādī 'Azīz, *Shahīd-i Sālis* (Lucknow: n.p., 1935) preface.

¹⁸ Āl-i 'Abā Jāfrī, *Yādgar-i Nūr*, (Agra: n.p., 1935).

Fatha Gilani... [He] calculated the dangers of this situation and extended an invitation to Sayed Noorullah Shoostari.

When the invitation reached Sayed Noorullah he read it and surveyed the situation. He surmised the griefs he would have to suffer and the sacrifices he would have to make. After considering all the consequences he made a firm decision to serve and protect Islam in India and left Shoostar for good... Had he not arrived in India at that time Islam would have changed its form in India and Shiaism would have been completely uprooted.¹⁹

This account serves the purpose of having Qāzī Nūru'llāh become a brave *mujāhid* (holy warrior), defending Islam and sure to become a martyr upon his death.

Some hagiographies create a dramatic picture of his martyrdom, filling in unsubstantiated details where history had left off. Most build from an apocryphal story of Qāzī Nūru'llāh as found in Muḥammad 'Alī Kashmīrī's *Nujūm al-Samā'*,

When Jahāngīr succeeded Akbar, Qāzī Nūru'llāh continued to work in his old post. Ultimately some '*ulamā'*' who were hostile to him but favourites of Jahāngīr were able to discover that the Qāzī professed the Imāmiyya faith. They complained to the Emperor that he followed the Shī'a Imāmiyya faith, for he did not adhere to anyone of the four schools of jurisprudence and issued decrees only in accordance with that particular school of jurisprudence which suited Imāmiyya faith. The Emperor getting displeased at this conversation said, "This is no proof of his Shī'ism for he was appointed subject to the condition that he would issue decrees in accordance with all the four schools of jurisprudence." Consequently the '*ulamā'*', hostile to him, began to wait for an opportunity to prove him a Shī'a and then to obtain orders for his execution from the Emperor. In pursuance of their objective they devised a trap and sent to the Qāzī one of their own men who posed as a Shī'a and became the Qāzī's disciple. He lived for a long time with the Qāzī and became his favourite. He got scent of *Majālisu ṣ-ṣ-mu'minīn*²⁰ and after great efforts and entreaties took the book to his own house, copied it out and secretly passed it on to the '*ulamā'*'. Making that work as their instrument, they conclusively proved before the Emperor that the Qāzī was a Shī'a and added that he deserved nothing short of death sentence [sic] for having written such and such objectionable things in it.²¹

One hagiography continues the account in this manner,

¹⁹ *Shahed-e-Salis*, (Karachi: Peermahomed Ebrahim Trust, n.d.) 37-40.

²⁰ One of Qāzī Nūru'llāh Shūstari's more important polemical writings.

²¹ Kahmīrī 15-16 as quoted in Rizvi 1:382-3.

... at the Sikandar Lodh Mosque [in Agra] a council of *mullās*²² (*mullās* who had been thirsting for his [Qāzī Nūru'llāh's] blood for some time) sat to decide his fate. They had already received the emperor's permission so what was there to do but to affix their seals to the document calling for the death-sentence. Forty-two seals were affixed; May these seals be burned into the foreheads of those who affixed them! What were the punishments called for?

1. Tongue pulled out through a cut in the upper throat.
2. Molten lead poured down the throat.
3. Whipping with a cat-o-nine-tails.
4. Beheading.²³

Faced with his imminent death, Qāzī Nūru'llāh seeks permission to perform his formal prayers, and,

At this point he requested pen and ink and on a potsherd wrote the following verse from the Qur'ān:

Oh Lord, I am helpless! Aid me!²⁴

and threw it into the air. After a bit the potsherd fell before him and written on the other side of it were the words:

If you truly be My servant, suffer patiently.

He then calmly offered his formal prayers. . .²⁵

All hagiographies agree that after his execution Qāzī Nūru'llāh's body was unceremoniously dumped in an uninhabited spot outside Agra. A few, however, continue with accounts of other miracles, adding to the sanctity of Qāzī Nūru'llāh's martyrdom. One account speaks of a portentous dream had by the emperor Jahāngīr,

One evening Jahāngīr had a dream in which an outraged Prophet Muḥammad said, "The chosen of God are being oppressed during your reign and you do not give permission for the burial of my son Nūru'llāh, even after his murder. Do you wish a Greater Oppression to befall you and destroy your throne and crown? Immediately order that the Mu'minīn [Shī'ites] bury the body of my son Nūru'llāh." The emperor was terrified by these words and bolting out of bed, ran panting from his bedroom. He immediately gave the order, "Proclaim throughout the city that those who are the Qāzī's co-religionists are to proceed with his burial."²⁶

²² Jurists, though colloquially this term carries with it the suggestion of ignorant bigotry.

²³ Saghīr Ḥasan, *Saifah-yi Nūr*, (Delhi: Mudīr Akhbār Iṣnā 'Asharī, 1919) 23

²⁴ Qur'ān 54:10.

²⁵ Ḥasan 27.

²⁶ Shabbīr Ḥasan Muḥsin, *Zikr-i Ḥamīd dar Ahwāl-i Nūru'llāh Shahīd*, (Lucknow: Matba' Iṣnā 'Asharī, 1912) 12-13.

If the intercession of the Prophet Muḥammad was not enough, another tradition has it that,

... a newly arrived Iranian merchant saw Fātimah in a dream and she commanded him, "The body of my son Nūru'llāh lies ignored, without benefit of coffin or internment." Thus informed, the merchant joined in the burial [of Qāzī Nūru'llāh].²⁷

I was told an alternate account that is still current among Shī'ite Muslims—and Hindus—of Agra: Qāzī Nūru'llāh's body laid undiscovered for three days until some herdsmen were drawn to it by the sweet odor that it exuded. They were surprised to discover that the body had not decomposed.²⁸ When the authorities were informed of this miracle, internment was allowed. Another version has it that,

... his corpse was discarded in a place filled with horrible smells where the offal of slaughterhouses and butchers was dumped. But, blood that contains the essence of purity cannot be affected by mundane impurities. The result of this was that where his body laid, all the stench was transformed into a sweet smell. The soul of the martyr displayed its supernatural power. As the odor spread throughout the wilderness, so the news of this miracle spread throughout the city. Large groups of people began to perform pilgrimages to the site.²⁹

I was also told that when Ḥamid Ḥusayn (1830–1888) and his brother came from Lucknow to Agra in 1854 to locate the exact spot of Qāzī Nūru'llāh's grave by excavating various spots at the general site, they were able to ascertain its position by a sweet odor that rose from one of the holes,³⁰ relating back to traditions of the odor emanating from the Qāzī's body. The phenomenon of the sweet odor is also found in personal accounts of individuals who have visited the *Mazār-i Shahīd-i Ṣāliḥ*. A letter written by Abū Ja'far and published in the April/May 1916 issue of *Risalah-yi Shī'ā* is reproduced below,

I went on a pilgrimage to the shrine of the Third Martyr and at 10:00 AM on a Friday I smelled the odor of fresh apples. Perplexed, I searched around the shrine, thinking that someone must have left some apples about, but I found nothing. I later learned that this was a miracle such as to be found at the shrine of Imām Ḥusayn where people often perceive the smell of apple. So is it at the shrine of this Martyr.

²⁷ Sibṭulḥasan, *Tazkirah-yi Majīd*, (Agra: Mazār-i Shahīd-i Ṣāliḥ, 1979) 115–116.

²⁸ This phenomenon is not limited to Islam alone. As Stephen Wilson states of Christian belief concerning the corpses of saints: "Incorruptibility of the corpse was usually, and still is, taken to be a sign of sanctity, and it is a commonplace of hagiology that saints' bodies give off sweet odours." (Stephen Wilson, "Introduction," *Saints and Their Cults*, [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983] 10.)

²⁹ Ḥasan 28.

³⁰ Sayyid Abū Ṭālib Rizvī, personal interview, Mazār-i Shahīd-i Ṣāliḥ, November 8, 1988.

I was preoccupied with this and spent most of every Friday morning at the shrine. Unfortunately, this phenomenon did not recur. Saturday, January 1, I went to the shrine to do my afternoon prayers. At exactly 1:00 PM I recited a *ṣajarat* [liturgical prayer] and was saying my personal prayers when all at once I was struck by a sweet odor. I was shocked for a short while and then came to the conclusion that the odor was probably coming from the flowers that people had strewn upon the grave. However, the more I thought about it, the more I became certain that this was not the odor of flowers but in fact that of apples. At that point I also included Qāzī Nūru'llāh in my prayers.³¹

Mahmoud Ayoub gives an account of the significance of the smell of apple as it is to be found at the shrine of Imām Ḥusayn,

One day as the two little boys [Imāms Ḥasan and Ḥusayn] were prancing around the angel [Gabriel, God's emissary to the Prophet Muḥammad], he stretched out his hand as though reaching for something, and handed them an apple, a pomegranate and a quince. The Prophet told them to take the fruits and share them with their parents. He later joined them and they all ate of the fruit; but whatever they ate was miraculously replaced. Thus the three fruits of paradise remained as they were after the death of the Prophet, and neither changed nor diminished until Fātimah died. With her death the pomegranate disappeared. Ḥusayn, the authority of this tradition, said that when his father 'Alī was martyred, the quince also disappeared, but the apple remained as it had been. So when Ḥasan was poisoned, only the original apple remained: it was in Ḥusayn's possession, but the tradition implied that it had lost the power to multiply itself. Ḥusayn used to smell it whenever he faced hardship and found in it much consolation and relief. When he was prevented from reaching the waters of the Euphrates at Karbalā', he smelled it both for relief and to quench his thirst. An hour before he died, his son 'Alī Zayn al-Ābidīn saw him biting it in desperation, a sign that his death was near. After his father's death, he sought the apple but could not find any trace of it. He asserted, however, that its sweet fragrance continued to emanate from his father's tomb, and only the sincere follower of the Holy Family can smell it before dawn.³²

This tradition of the smell of apples at the *Mazār-i Shahid-i Sālis*, drawn, as it were, from the reservoir of images contained within the paradigm of Ḥusayn, implies an equivalency of both the shrine of Qāzī Nūru'llāh and the shrine of Ḥusayn. This implicit linkage of the two shrines is not limited to miraculous smells. An interesting account is to be found in Muḥammad Ḥusayn Nawgānwī's *Tagkirah-yi Bī Bahā fi Tarājīm al-'Ulamā'* that the author re-

³¹ Muḥsin, 20-21.

³² Ayoub 45-46.

produces from the April 15, 1919 issue of the newspaper *Isnā 'Asharī* that was published in Delhi. One Abū Jā'far relates,

For many months this year I suffered from piles and could find no medical relief. I then humbly sought a cure at his [Qāzī Nūru'llāh Shūstārī's] shrine. One Friday, when I was walking away from the cenotaph, my heart was suddenly filled with an unexplained joy. I addressed the cenotaph, saying, "I have been here for two months but as of yet my entreaties have not been answered. At the same time my heart is at peace, although my illness continues." And my affliction continued, though I remained uncomplaining. Then a friend from Shahabād in Bihar requested some soil from the grave of the Qāzī. I spoke with the *khādim* who said, "Take some [ashes] from the censer." I informed the *khādim* that this would not do and the real thing was the best. That night I had a dream in which I saw an Irānī gentleman standing at the head of the grave. He took a pinch of ash from the censer and gave it to me, saying, "This will cure all manner of illnesses."³³

In the above report, Abū Jā'far relates that a friend had requested that he obtain some soil from the Qāzī's grave but in the end was advised in a dream by a figure—the implication being that it was Qāzī Nūru'llāh himself—that ashes from the censer in the shrine had the actual miraculous healing powers. This concept of the soil of Qāzī Nūru'llāh's grave, or for that matter, ashes from the shrine's censer, having miraculous powers of healing might be inordinate if the concept was not already imbedded in the Shī'ite consciousness. The source of this notion is *sayyid al-shuhadā'* Ḥusayn and the place of his martyrdom, Karbalā'. As Ayoub explains,

... the sanctity of Karbalā' rendered its soil a course of blessing and healing... Many traditions enjoin the faithful to apply the sacred soil to their sick members, or to drink it mixed with water in case of internal ailment.³⁴

Dwight Donaldson, who was at Karbalā' in the early 1930s, witnessed a brisk trade in clay tablets made from the soil there. Commenting on Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī's treatise, *Tuḥfāt al-Zā'irīn* (A Gift for Pilgrims) he states,

This book specifies very particularly that it is only the clay from the sacred area around the tomb of the Imam Husain that has healing properties. The seventh Imam, Musa ibn Jā'far, is said to have declared that people should not take the clay from his grave, or from the graves of any of the other Imams, except only the grave of the Imam Husain, for he maintained that God had given that particular clay healing value for the

³³ Muḥammad Ḥusayn Nawgānwī, *Taḥkīrah-yi Bi Bahā' fi Tarājīm al-ʿUlamā'*, (Delhi: n.p., 1934) 415.

³⁴ Ayoub 182.

Shī'ites and their friends... [and] the eighth Imam, Ali Riḍa, said, "To eat the clay from a tomb is generally forbidden, for it is like eating the blood of a corpse, except in the case of the Imam Husain, when it is a remedy for every disease."³⁵

Accordingly, the content of Abū Ja'far's dream is quite correct in its stipulation that the ashes of a censer are more fit than the soil from Qāzī Nūru'llāh's grave. Behind all the action of Abū Ja'far's account is an implicit understanding that there must be some link between the *Mazār-i Shahīd-i Sāliḥ* and the shrine of Ḥusayn at Karbalā' in terms of the mechanism of miracle.

With the possible equivalency of the two shrines, the soteriological implications of performing *ziyārat* to the *Mazār-i Shahīd-i Sāliḥ* are a necessary consideration not ignored in the hagiographical literature concerning Qāzī Nūru'llāh Shūstārī. A study of this does require a discussion of the soteriological implications of *ziyārat* in Shī'ite Islam.

The soteriological value (most often termed *ṣawāb*, or 'merit') of a visitation to the graves of the Imāms, including Ḥusayn's, is well known to most—if not all—Shī'ite Muslims. Ayoub brings together several traditions that directly address the *ṣawāb* of *ziyārat* to the shrine of Ḥusayn at Karbalā', some moderate, some extreme. The more moderate traditions place Karbalā' on par with Mecca as a terminus of pilgrimage. In one tradition, the fourth Imām, Zayn al-Ābidīn, states,

God made the spot of Karbalā' a sacred and safe *ḥaram*³⁶ 24,000 years before he created the earth of the *Ka'bah*³⁷ and made it a sacred and secure *ḥaram*. When, moreover, God (exalted be He) shall cause the earth to quake and be melted [on Judgement Day], Karbalā' shall be lifted up as it is, luminous and pure, and placed in the highest gardens of paradise. It shall be made the most exalted above wherein only prophets and apostles shall dwell.³⁸

More extreme traditions go as far as to place Karbalā' above Mecca as a religiously charged locus due to the former being the site of the martyrdom and burial of Ḥusayn. The sixth Imām, Ja'far al-Šādiq, relates a tradition that has God speaking to the spot on which the *Ka'bah* rests,

Had it not been for the sake of him whom the earth of Karbalā' contains I would never have created thee or the house on which thou primest thyself. Be quiet therefore and hold thy peace, be a humble earth, meek

³⁵ Dwight Donaldson, *The Shī'ite Religion* (London: Luzac & Company, 1933) 90.

³⁶ *Ḥaram* in of of itself means sacred precinct.

³⁷ The cubical building in Mecca; the *axis mundi* of Islam.

³⁸ Ja'far ibn Muḥammad bin Qawlawayh al-Qummī, *Kamāl al-Ziyārat*, ed. Mirzā 'Abdullāh al-Ḥusayn al-Amānī al-Tabrizī, (Najaf: Murāzawīyyah, 1937), 263 as quoted in Ayoub 81.

and humiliated before the spot of Karbalā', or I will cause thee to melt and be thrown into the fire of hell!³⁹

With Karbalā' having a higher status than Mecca, it is not surprising that soteriologically *ziyārat* to Karbalā' is greater than performing the *Hajj* to Mecca. Traditions also exist that speak directly of this. They, too, run the gamut of moderate to extreme. The basic soteriology of *ziyārat* is found in a conversation between the Prophet Muḥammad and his grandson Ḥusayn,

... O father, what shall be the reward of those who visit our graves, scattered as they will be in the earth? (The Prophet answered) These will be the men and women of my community who would make pilgrimage to your grave seeking blessing by this act. It will be incumbent upon me to seek them out on the Day of Resurrection and save them from the awful fears of that hour and from all their transgressions: and God would cause them to dwell in paradise.⁴⁰

Confronted with the *sawāb* of *ziyārat* to the shrine of Ḥusayn at Karbalā' as well as the incumbency of *Hajj* to Mecca, Shī'ite Muslims needed some comparative valuation of the two. Ayoub relates two traditions that address this need,

To a certain man who came on a pilgrimage to the grave of Ḥusayn from far-off Yemen for no reason but to visit the sacred tomb and offer supplications to God, the Sixth *Imām* [Ja'far al-Ṣādiq] declared that one pilgrimage to the tomb of Ḥusayn equals 30 pilgrimages [*hajjs*] in the company of the Apostle of God [Muḥammad], with all their rites of *umrah*, the lesser pilgrimage. . . . The fifth *Imām*, al-Bāqir, was even more generous than his son. He declared in a long dialogue with one of his followers that one pilgrimage to Karbalā' on the day of *Āshūrā'*⁴¹ is equal to a thousand *Hajj* pilgrimages and an equal number of engagements in the holy war with the prophets.⁴²

About the same figures are given in a tradition that is to be found in *Tuḥfat al-ʿAwām*, a religious manual for Shī'ites that is available throughout South Asia. In this, Ja'far al-Ṣādiq quantifies the *sawāb* of *ziyārat* to Karbalā' at, "... a thousand *Hajjs*, a thousand *umrahs*, and a thousand *jihāds* with the Prophet."⁴³

The implicit linkage of the two shrines in the sphere of the miraculous has been discussed above. The soteriological linkage is surprisingly explicit as can be seen in the following tradition:

³⁹ Ibn Qawlawayh 267 as quoted in Ayoub 182.

⁴⁰ Ibn Qawlawayh 52 as quoted in Ayoub 184.

⁴¹ The death anniversary of Ḥusayn.

⁴² Ayoub 188.

⁴³ *Tuḥfat al-ʿAwām*, Muḥammad Ḥusayn, ed., 14th ed. (Lucknow: Tej Kumār Press, Pvt Ltd, 1975) 299.

THE MERIT OF PERFORMING A PILGRIMAGE TO THE QĀZĪ'S TOMB

It is commonly known that a young man, a resident of an Agra suburbs, departed for Karbalā' to perform a pilgrimage to the shrine of Imām Ḥusayn. He left behind his old and infirm mother. After arriving in Karbalā', he had no desire to return home. His mother (and it is said his family) was so disturbed by his absence that they lamented day and night, attending majlis-s, clutching standards, pulpits, and representations of Ḥusayn's tomb, praying that he be returned to them. In this way a year passed. Then one night the young man was visited by Imām Ḥusayn in a dream who told him, "Your mother and family are sorely troubled by your absence. Return home and gladden their hearts." The young man awoke but considered the dream just that and said nothing of it. The next night he again saw Imām Ḥusayn in a dream and again received the same command. However the young man still considered this a mere dream. On the third night Imām Ḥusayn again came to him in a dream, commanding him to return to his homeland. This time the young man submitted, "I humbly accept your Holiness's command and shall return to my homeland on the morrow. However, I am grieved that I shall be distanced from your holy grave and be deprived of the merit of this pilgrimage." Hearing this, the Imām retorted, "The shrine of Qāzī Nūrullāh is in India. Performing a pilgrimage to the shrine of this descendent of mine in Agra will avail you the same merit as a pilgrimage to my own," and he passed on the signs that would show the location of the grave. Till then the young man was ignorant of the Qāzī's name. He returned to his homeland and rejoined his family and destitute mother, telling them of his dream. His mother, following the signs given by the Prince of the Martyrs and relayed by her son, went to the shrine of the Qāzī and found all to be accurate. She received the blessing of being a pilgrim. After she passed away she was buried near the shrine of Qāzī Nūrullāh.⁴⁴

The idea of visiting the shrine of Qāzī Nūrullāh instead of the shrine of Ḥusayn at Karbalā' is still current in the minds of many Shī'ites in India. Once at the *Mazār-i Shahīd-i Sāliḥ*, I spoke with three businessmen from Bombay who had stopped off in Agra while on the way to Delhi. Upon my enquiry as to why they were visiting the shrine, one replied, "We cannot afford the trip to Karbalā', so we come here."

Conclusion

A paradigm such as Ḥusayn necessarily carries with it a universal vocabulary of symbols that are accessed through particular images; images

⁴⁴ Muḥsin, 19-20.

that refer to episodes in his sacred biography. Because of Ḥusayn's penultimate position as *Sayyid al-Shuhadā'*, the reservoir of images connected with his paradigm is drawn from to embellish the sacred biographies—both oral and written—of other martyrs who have followed him. When these images appear within the biographies of other martyrs, the audience is immediately taken back to the image's source, i.e. Ḥusayn, and the martyr at hand fades into the background. It might also be said that in one respect the martyr's paradigm is a model, in every sense of the word, of the paradigm of Ḥusayn and serves as a point of access to the latter. This has been the case with *Shahīd-i Ṣāliḥ* Qāzī Nūrullāh Shūstari. His evolution from a historical figure, to an Enumerated Martyr, and finally, to a model of Ḥusayn has been a natural process within the Shī'ite ethos of South Asia.

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KHIDR IN THE ISLAMIC TRADITION¹

In that wilderness I lived for four years. God gave me my eating without any toil of mine. Khidr the Green Ancient was my companion during that time - he taught me the Great Name of God.²

Introduction

Ibn Jarīr Tabari (d. A.D. 935), the great Muslim historian, used as a title "The History of Prophets and Kings", for his encyclopedic classic *Oeuvre*, for the purpose of emphasizing that Islamic history has a prophetic quality.³ In Tabari's view, history has been thus suffused with prophecy, to the extent that it is impossible to extricate the 'sacred' from the 'profane'.

Looking at it with a critical modern perspective, Islamic history revolves around a great many legends and historical events that cannot be proven by modern science. Nevertheless, the great dynamics of Islamic history, in the view of Tabari and other major Muslim historians, has been the Islamic revelation and its historical interpretation. The goal of existence in Islam is a prophetic existence. Although prophets are not sinless, they represent the perfect human model, and embody the ultimate human quality in God's eyes. Because of their unique role as the standard bearers of the divine-human and human-divine relationship, Prophets become the special focus of human history.

There are numerous prophets, 'saints'⁴ and other heroes of Islam who have exerted a great influence on aspects of Islamic history. One among them is Khidr.⁵ In Islamic folk literature, one finds a variety of names and titles associated with Khidr. Some say Khidr is a title; others have called it an epithet.⁶

¹ I am indebted to Dr. Ibrahim Abu-Rabi' and Dr. Willem A. Bijlefeld of Hartford Seminary for their invaluable comments and suggestions in the formulation of this essay.

² Sufi Ibrahim ibn Adham quoted in the article on "Khidr" in Cyril Glasse's *The Concise Encyclopedia of Islam* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc., 1989), 224-25.

³ Cf. Mahmoud M. Ayoub, *Islam Faith and Practice* (Markham, Ontario: The Open Press Limited, 1989), 33-34; 65b

⁴ Although this is the common translation of *Wali*, *Pir* and other related Islamic terms, it, nevertheless, "obscures the considerable diversity underlying these terms." See P.M. Currie, *The Shrine and Cult of Mu'in al-Din Chishti* (Delhi: Oxford, 1989), 1.

⁵ Khidr is spelled in several ways: al-Khadir (in Oriental/German scholarship), Khezzr and Khizr (in Persian and Indian accounts) and so on.

⁶ See note 73 in Muhammad Asad, *The Message of The Qur'an* (Gibraltar: Dar al-Andalus, 1980), 449; cf. A.J. Wensinck, "Khadir" in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, no.29 (Leyden: E.J. Brill, 1925), 861.

He has been equated with St. George, identified as the Muslim "version of Elijah" and also referred to as the "eternal wanderer".⁷ Scholars have also called and characterized him as a 'saint', prophet-saint, mysterious prophet-guide and so on.

The story, or the 'legend' as it is often called, of Khidr finds its source in the Qur'an, chapter 18 (*Sūrat Kahf*) verses 60-82,

Then they found one of Our votaries whom We had blessed and given knowledge from Us.⁸

These verses primarily deal with an allegorical story relating Moses' journey in search for truth. Full of symbolism, the Qur'anic story introduces the mysterious figure of Khidr, who symbolizes "the utmost depth of mystic insight accessible to man."⁹ Khidr is not mentioned in the Qur'an by name. However, the commentators have generally agreed, partly on the basis of *Hadith* literature, that the mysterious person with whom Moses' meeting takes place, i.e. the meeting mentioned in 18:65, and who is called in the Qur'an as "one of Our votaries", is no other than the 'eternal' Khidr.¹⁰

In the context of the above, a number of questions come to mind: 1) Is Khidr a name or does it represent a title? 2) Is Khidr a messenger and/or a prophet, or simply a *Wali*? and 3) is he one of the 'eternal'? These questions have engaged the minds of many Qur'an commentators and scholars of Islam. The purpose of this paper is to look at the various ways in which the figure of Khidr is understood by them. The questions most pertinent to our enquiry deal with three different aspects of Khidr: 1) his identity; 2) his status and 3) relevance.

Khidr in History

Khidr is one of the four prophets whom the Islamic tradition recognizes as being 'alive' or 'immortal'. The other three being *Idris* (Enoch), *Ilyas* (Elias), and *Isa* (Jesus).¹¹ Khidr is immortal because he drank from the water of life. There are some who have asserted, however, that this Khidr is the same per-

⁷ Extensive literature and references on al-Khidr are included in Haim Schwarzbaum's *Biblical and Extra-Biblical Legends in Islamic Folk-Literature* (Waldorf-Hessen: Verlag für Orientkunde, 1982), 17-18.

⁸ S.18:65 in the Qur'an, tr. Ahmed Ali (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, paperback edition, 1988), 256.

⁹ Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an*, 449.

¹⁰ Yusuf Ali translates it as "one of Our servants," *The Holy Qur'an* (Lahore: Shaikh Muhammad Ashraf, 1938), 748.

¹¹ Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 202.

son as Elijah.¹² He is also identified with St. George.¹³ Amongst the earliest opinions in Western scholarship, we have Rodwell's understanding where he claims that the name "Khidr is formed from Jethro."¹⁴

Interestingly enough, there is a link here between Khidr and the classical Jewish legend of the 'Wandering Jew'. Krappe, in his major work on folklore, says:

it is difficult to dissociate the figure [of *the Wandering Jew*] from that of Al-Khidr, one of the Arabic prophets. . . . With the crusades Europeans became familiar with this legendary figure, and out of it developed the character of Ahasuerus or Isaac Laquedem.¹⁵

Haim supports and even quotes Krappe to provide the link between 'the Wandering Jew legend' and the story of Khidr.¹⁶ On the basis of some similarities of occupation, Khidr is also identified with the prophet Jeremiah or rather it is the other way around; Jeremiah is likened to Khidr.¹⁷

As far as the identity of Khidr in Islamic history is concerned, there are as many opinions as there are commentators.¹⁸ Enormous detail is found pertaining to his name, genealogy, appearance, origin and status in the chronicles of Muslim commentators and historians since the beginning of Islamic scholarship.¹⁹ Most of this literature exists either in connection with the commentary of S.18 of the Qur'an, or it is linked with the tales of the prophets (*Qisas al-Anbiya'*).

Historically speaking, Islam inherited the tradition of Khidr from "earlier myths and faiths."²⁰ Sale has argued that Muslim tradition confounds Khidr

¹² "Muslim version of Elijah" George K. Anderson, *The Legend of the Wandering Jew* (Providence: Brown University Press, 1965), 409; Exhaustive material on Khidr's resemblance with Elijah is presented in Friedlaender's "Khidr" in the *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* v.vii (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1915), 693-95.

¹³ Peter L. Wilson, "The Green Man: The Trickster Figure in Sufism", in *Gnosis Magazine*, Spring 1991, 23.

¹⁴ On Rodwell, see W.M. Thackston Jr., *The Tales of the Prophets of al-Kisai* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1978), xxiv.

¹⁵ Alexander H. Krappe, *The Science of Folklore* (New York: Barnes and Noble Inc., 1930), 103.

¹⁶ However, he refers to the Wandering Jew as *Ahasver*. See Haim Schwarzbaum, *Biblical and Extra-Biblical Legends*, 17

¹⁷ Schwarzbaum mentions several references to it in his excellent work *Biblical and Extra-Biblical Legends*. For instance Tabari's *Tafsir*, (Cairo: 1373), v. III, 28-29, and Tha'labi's *Ara'is al-Afajalis*, (Cairo: 1324), 126. It is the intermingling with the wild beast which links Khidr to the prophet Jeremiah. I. Friedlaender has further linked it back to the legend of the "Wandering Jew." See Schwarzbaum, 167-68.

¹⁸ Historical identity here does not mean determining the actual person of Khidr in history but as it is related in the "divergent sources" such as "prophetology, folklore," etc. See Henry Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn Arabi* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 55

¹⁹ See Wensinck, "al-Khadir" in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 861-865

²⁰ Peter Wilson, "The Green Man" *Gnosis*, 22

with Phineas, Elias, and St. George, "saying that his soul passed by a metempsychosis successively through all three"²¹

From a critical historical perspective, the legend of Khidr is found to be linked with some of the most ancient legends known to us today—the epic of Gilgamesh, the Alexander Romance, and the Wandering Jew, just to name a few.²² These, at the same time, are also perceived to be the three main sources of the episode of Khidr, implying, as it were, to be the 'source' of the whole Qur'anic narrative of the story of Moses and Khidr; in fact, of the whole of S.18 (*Kahf*).²³ However, a modern commentator has this to say about the historical links of Khidr,

The nearest equivalent figure in the literature of the People of the Book is Melchizedek . . . In Gen. xiv. 18-20, he appears as king of Salem, priest of the Most High God . . .²⁴

However, since the advent of Islamic folk literature, Khidr has become an integral part of Islamic folklore as well as serious Sufi literature. Just as the figure of the 'Wandering Jew' became the main allegory of the Jewish people during their diaspora, the figure of Khidr became an allegory for the travelling sufis.

Khidr in the Qur'ān

In the Qur'ān the story begins by Moses' declaration to his servant/companion that "I will not give up till I reach the confluence of two oceans"²⁵ Moses and Joshua had begun to search for "a servant of Allah" from whom Moses was to learn the 'secret knowledge,' given him by God. As seen above, Muslim tradition identifies this "servant" as Khidr.

Qur'anic commentators have related several opinions with regard to the status of Khidr. Some say he is one of the prophets; others refer to him simply as an angel who functions as a guide to those who seek God.²⁶ And there are yet others who argue for his being a perfect *wali* meaning the one whom God has taken as a friend.²⁷

Some commentators who have thought of Khidr as a prophet, have mainly argued on the basis of the Qur'anic reference to him as *rahma*. What does this

²¹ George Sale, *The Koran* (London: William Tegg, 1961), 244.

²² See A.J. Wensinck for his valuable analysis of these 'links' in his long article on "al-Khadir" in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 862.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *The Holy Qur'ān*, edited by The Presidency of Islamic Researches, IFTA, (Madinah: King Fahd Holy Qur'ān Printing Complex, 1410 A.H.), 840.

²⁵ S.18:60 Qur'ān, translation of Ahmed Ali, 255.

²⁶ Sultan Hasan, *ʿIrfan al-Qur'ān* (Agra: Maktaba ʿIrfan, n.d.), 113.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

term, *rahma*, mean in its Qur'anic context? As related above the Qur'an relates in S.18:65; Khidr is one of those "...whom We had blessed...". This characterization usually applies to the prophets. *Rahma* comes from the root R H M meaning "womb". Other translations of S.18:65 include,

And there they found a devotee among Our devotees. We had blessed him with Our grace...²⁸

...they found one of our servants unto whom we had granted mercy from us...²⁹

Similar in S.43:32, the Qur'an, while expounding one of the characteristics of God's prophets, declares them as "the ones who dispense the favour of your Lord" as against those who are seemingly "wealthy" and hold important positions (chiefs) in this world. Here the Qur'an argues for the Prophet as the one who embodies God's *rahma* due to God's will alone and not due to any worldly title or position which he did or did not have.

The Qur'anic usage of *rahma* here is the same as in S.18:65. It deals with the quality of being a *Rahim*—the "ever-merciful"; the superlative degree of which is applied to God alone. So God being a *Rahim* sends His messengers (and prophets) as symbols of His *rahma*. And as a result they become a channel through which God's *rahma* is dispensed among mankind.

Another prominent example of this is found in S.21:107, towards the end of *Sūrat al-Anbiyā'*, wherein referring to Prophet Muḥammad the Qur'an says, "We have sent you as a benevolence to the creatures of the world", using again the word *rahma* as denoting the sending of the Prophet as "the mercy" from God.³⁰

Other verses which bear similar association between the prophets and the *rahma* are S.11:28' and 63 where Noah and Salih respectively speak of God's "grace" and "blessings".

In the second part of the same verse i.e., 18:65b, we read, "and [Khidr has been] given knowledge from Us." Sale continues the translation of this verse as, "...and whom we had taught wisdom from before us." Amir-Ali puts it as "...and endowed him with knowledge from Ourselves."

So Khidr is a "mercy" from God and he has been given knowledge from God. Here it seems plausible to argue that these qualities certainly allude to his elevated status. To possess divine knowledge is a quality of saints and

²⁸ Hashim Amir-Ali, *The Message of the Qur'an Presented in Perspective* (Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1974), K-30, Sec. 328-330

²⁹ George Sale, *The Koran*, 244.

³⁰ Note that here Ahmed Ali translates *rahma* as "benevolence"; cf. A. Yusuf Ali's translation as "mercy".

prophets, but Khidr is evidently more than a saint, since he symbolizes God's "mercy" which in the Qur'anic sense clearly refers to prophecy.

Commentators are more or less in agreement that the status of Moses is certainly higher than that of Khidr, since he (Moses) is not only a Messenger (*rasūl*) but also a prophet (*nabī*),³¹ bearer of the divine revelation and provisions of the law. Khidr, on the other hand, does not hold these titles, although the Qur'an calls him a "Servant" of God. Ibn 'Arabi's account of this encounter also sheds some light on the nature of their relationship. Netton, for example, points out that there is an

... overwhelming emphasis on rank and knowledge ... for al-Khadir is aware that Moses hold the exalted rank of Messenger (*rasūl*), which he, al-Khadir, does not ...³²

However, to analyze the subsequent verse of *Sūrat al-Kahf*, verse 66, in this context, we find that it deals with Moses' request to be instructed by Khidr, which, seemingly at least, puts Khidr at a higher position than that of Moses. This further confirms the status of Khidr as a prophet, as mentioned in the previous verse.

The emphasis here is on two key words which perhaps determine the overall meaning of the verse, *atabi'ka* and *tu'allimani* which may have direct bearing upon the status of Khidr. Ahmed Ali translates it as,

... "May I attend upon you that you may instruct me in the knowledge you have been taught of the right way?" (emphasis added)

Amir-Ali has translated the key words as,

... "May I follow thee so that thou mayst teach me something of thy wisdom?" (emphasis added)

As we can see here the translation of *tu'allimani* is "instruct me" or "teach me". Moses, therefore, is requesting Khidr to "instruct" him "in the knowledge ... of the right way" (S.18:66b). Since Moses in the Islamic tradition is regarded as a prophet as well as a messenger; bearer of the divine commandments, and conveyer of God's truth to his people, his seeking of knowledge from a non-prophet does not fit the criterion of the divine wisdom given to all prophets. A prophet is *rahma* of God as well as a bearer of the knowledge given to none other than prophets. It can be said that it would not be possible for Khidr, firstly, to have knowledge from God, and, secondly, to "instruct" Moses in that knowledge he is given by God, without being a prophet or for that

³¹ See Hifzur Rahman, *Qisasul Qur'an* (Delhi: Nadwatul Musannifin, 1975), pt.I, 545; cf. Ian Richard Netton. "Theophany as Paradox: Ibn 'Arabi's Account of al-Khidr in his *Fusus al-Hikam*" in the *Journal of the Muhiyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society* XI: (1992), 18.

³² Netton, *Ibid*.

matter *rahma*, himself.³³ It would be absurd to believe that Moses of all God's messengers was less in knowledge than a non-prophet. On the other hand, it is also argued that Moses with whom Khidr's meeting takes place is not the Moses of Banu Israel. In fact there is an *ḥadīth* which mentions such a claim while refuting it at the same time on the authority of 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abbās.³⁴

At this point, however, it must be noted that the concept of *rahma* is closely linked with divine "guidance" either in the form of revelation given to the prophets or simply by their mere presence and witness unto mankind.³⁵ The prophecy of Khidr thus is the 'prophecy of saintship' (*nubuwwatu'l-wilāyat*), whereas that of Moses is characterized as the 'prophecy of institution' (*nubuwwatu'l-tashrī*).³⁶

Going back to the origin of the story we find a different set of arguments emerging from the rationale behind Moses' search for and subsequent meeting with Khidr. And this sheds further light on an overall understanding of the story. It begins with Moses making a claim about being the most learned of all men in the world,³⁶

[Due to this belief] . . . he no longer tried to acquire more knowledge. So God sought for an occasion to stimulate him to obtain more knowledge . . . [and one day after his address to his people] one of them asked him: 'Can there be found anybody more learned than you?' He replied: 'No, such a man I never met'. Then God revealed: 'Yes, such a man does exist. Our servant Khidr is more learned than you are' . . .³⁷

As we can see, Moses, by holding such a belief, created a necessity of being instructed by someone who surpassed him in knowledge. Although one may argue that the reason for such an "instruction" was the mannerism in which he proclaimed it,³⁸ the fact remains that Moses was the most knowledgeable of all men of his time as he was a prophet of distinction in steadfastness and yet there was a sense of "the absolute" in his tone for which God had instituted his meeting with Khidr.³⁹

It is in this context that most commentators regard Khidr as one of the prophets. For as the Qur'anic concept of *rahma*, analysed above, also suggests the same and moreover indicates that both Moses and Khidr possess "some divine knowledge not possessed by the other."⁴⁰

³³ Hifzur Rahman, *Qasasul Qur'an*, 538; cf. Thackston, *The Tales of the Prophets*, 208.

³⁴ Moses received the "guidance" (revelation) as well as the "mercy" from God whereas Mary received only the blessings and the "mercy". Cf. 6:154, 7:52; 19:21.

³⁵ R.A. Nicholson, *Studies in Islamic Mysticism* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1921), 141.

³⁶ Muhammad Shāfi', *Ma'arif al-Qur'an* (Karachi: Dar al-Ma'arif, 1978), vol. V: 591.

³⁷ J.M.S. Baljon, (tr.), *A Mystical Interpretation of Prophetic Tales by an Indian Muslim Shah Wali Allah's Tawil al-Aḥādīth* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1973), 39-40.

³⁸ Muhammad Shāfi', *Ma'arif al-Qur'an*, 591.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Netton, "Theophany as Paradox," 18.

On the one hand, Moses is placed above Khidr in rank as a messenger; on the other, it is argued that they both possess different sets of knowledge. This latter position is particularly held by Ibn 'Arabi, mainly, in order to present the elevated status of the esoteric knowledge and,

of the gnosis that perceives not only the necessity for and validity of [the] Law, but also the inescapable validity and necessity of those aspects of cosmic becoming that elude the Law...⁴¹

Khidr in Sufism

Khidr is associated with the water of life.⁴² Since he drank the water of immortality he is described as the one who has found the source of life, "the Eternal Youth."⁴³ He is the mysterious guide and immortal saint in the popular Islamic piety.

Sometimes the mystics would meet him on their journeys; he would inspire them, answer their questions, rescue them from danger, and, in special cases, invest them with the *khirqa*, which was accepted as valid in the tradition of Sufi initiation.⁴⁴

In Sufi tradition, Khidr has come to be known as one of the *afṛād* or those "who receive illumination direct from God without human mediation."⁴⁵ He is the hidden initiator of those who walk the mystical path like some of those from the Uwaisi ṭarīqa.⁴⁶ Uwaisis are those who "enter the mystical path without being initiated by a living master." Instead they begin their mystical journey either by following the guiding light of the teachings of the earlier masters or by being "initiated by the mysterious prophet-saint Khidr."⁴⁷

Khidr has had thus gained enormous reputation and popularity in the Sufi tradition due to his role of an initiator. Through this way come several sufi orders which claim initiation through Khidr and consider him their master. It has become yet another possible way of initiation through "a source other than a human master." Besides the Uwaisis, history records that Ibn 'Arabi, the great mystical giant from Islamic Spain, claimed to have received

⁴¹ R.W.J. Austin, *The Bevels of Wisdom* (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 250.

⁴² Cf. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 106.

⁴³ Corbin, *Creative Imagination*, 56.

⁴⁴ Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 106.

⁴⁵ Wilson, "The Green Man," in *Gnosis*, 23.

⁴⁶ They are called Uwaisi after the name of Uwais al-Qarani, a contemporary of the Prophet who "lived in Yemen and converted to Islam without ever meeting the Prophet." Since Uwais had no visible human guide, he became the model for those who are content with a "hidden" master; one of the most famous was Abu'l-Hasan Kharragani. See Schimmel, *And Muhammad is His Messenger: The Veneration of the Prophet in Islamic Piety* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 22; and Corbin, *Creative Imagination*, 32, 53-54.

⁴⁷ Schimmel, *And Muhammad Is His Messenger*, 22; Cf. Vollers, K. "Chidher," *A.R.W. (Archiv für Religions Wissenschaft)*, XII (1909), 252ff.

the *Khirqā* from Khidr.⁴⁸ Khidr had thus come to symbolize "the third path" to the knowledge of God, purely and constantly supernatural, giving access to the divine mystery (*ghayb*) itself.⁴⁹ In the writings of 'Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī, Khidr rules over "the Men of the Unseen" (*rijal al-ghayb*)—the exalted saints and angels.⁵⁰

Khidr is also claimed by and included among what in the classical Sufism are called the *abdāl*, ("those who take turns") or the 'saints' (*awliya*) of Islam.⁵¹ In a divinely instituted hierarchy of such saints Khidr holds the rank of their "spiritual head". They are called *abdāl* due to their role of becoming a "substitute" for Khidr and taking turns in "helping in his mission of assisting and saving good men in danger and distress."⁵²

Here one may ask the question how Khidr can relate to a disciple who materially and organically exists in this world of space and time! In other words, as Corbin puts it, is the "disciple's relation to Khidr similar to the relation he would have had with any visible earthly" master! It seems, as Corbin also suggests, that questioning the nature of such a relationship is to question the historical existence of Khidr himself.⁵³ Whereas Khidr, as we know, is "transhistorical" and by virtue of being "immortal" transcendent. Further the danger in describing the phenomenon of Khidr is more than real.

If, taking the standpoint of analytical psychology, we speak of Khidr as an archetype, he will seem to lose his reality and become a figment of the imagination, if not of the intellect. And if we speak of him as a real person, we shall no longer be able to characterize the difference in structure between Khidr's relationship with his disciple and the relationship that any other *shaykh* on this earth can have with his.⁵⁴

Hence the experience of being a disciple of Khidr "invests the disciple, as an individual, with a transcendent, 'transhistorical' dimension."⁵⁵ It is an experience which lies beyond the spatiotemporal conditions of our sense perception.

The immortality of Khidr is a symbol of the immensity of his knowledge and providential wisdom. By virtue of being immortal and counted among the four immortal prophets (mentioned above), he is revered in the Muslim

⁴⁸ Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 105-6; See also Corbin, *Creative Imagination*, 63-67, for a detailed exposition of this.

⁴⁹ Louis Massignon, *The Passion of al-Hallaj*, Herbert Mason, tr., II (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 54.

⁵⁰ Nicholson, *Studies in Islamic Mysticism*, 82.

⁵¹ Not a Qur'anic doctrine but mentioned in *hadith*, the *abdāl* are first mentioned in Imam Ibn Hanbal's *Musnad*; See Virginia Vacca, "Social and Political Aspects of Egyptian and Yamani Sufism," in the *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society*: 8:4 (October 1960), 233-34.

⁵² Louis Massignon quoted in Vacca, *Ibid.*, note 1.

⁵³ Corbin, *Creative Imagination*, 54-55

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

tradition and looked upon by the sufis in great veneration. But sufis have also used Khidr's symbolism in another way. 'Attar, in his long allegorical poem *Manṭiq al-Ṭayr*, presents Khidr as the opposite of what a sufi may desire. In a dialogue with a "fool of God" and Khidr, Khidrīan life style is shown to be that of an antinomy to the "Way". In this dialogue Khidr asks the "fool of God", "O perfect man, will you be my friend?" And the reply from the one, in the Way of God, is,

You and I are not compatible, for you have drunk long draughts of the water of immortality so that you will always exist, and I wish to give up my life.⁵⁶

Symbolism of Khidr

Khidr literally means "The Green One", representing freshness of spirit and eternal liveliness, green symbolizing the freshness of knowledge "drawn out of the living sources of life."⁵⁷ It implies regeneration as Schwarzbaum has pointed out.⁵⁸ The color green has also been related to Khidr's disappearing into the "green landscape" after departing from Moses.⁵⁹ It is a sort of 'becoming green', or by way of disappearing and teaching a lesson, making knowledge 'afresh' for the one who is being taught. It is afresh because it is "drawn from Allah's own knowledge."⁶⁰

It could also be taken to imply the connection with the wilderness, fields etc. where Khidr is most likely to meet the lost and troubled whence he could guide them. Whatever the source for this green may be, it has come to symbolize the benign presence of the divine wisdom as imparted by the Divine Himself to Khidr and to Prophet Muḥammad—hence the inseparable association between the Prophetic love and praise in pious Muslim religious ceremonies and the color green. It is also well known that the cloak of the Prophet is associated with either white or green.⁶¹ Interestingly, however, not all accounts of Khidr's appearance describe him in green. Nicholson, in his classical work on Islamic mysticism reporting about Abu Sa'id ibn Abi'l-Khayr's self-imposed exile, says,

⁵⁶ Farid al-Din 'Attar, *Manṭiq al-Ṭayr (The Conference of the Birds)* S.C. Nott, tr. (London: The Janus Press, 1954), 17.

⁵⁷ *Holy Qur'an* (Madinah: 1410 A.H.), 840 n. 2411.

⁵⁸ Schwarzbaum, *Biblical and Extra-Biblical*, 18.

⁵⁹ Jan Knappert, *Islamic Legends: Histories of the Heroes Saints and Prophets of Islam I* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1985), 116.

⁶⁰ *Holy Qur'an* (Madinah: 1410 A.H.), 840, n. 2411.

⁶¹ See Schimmel, *And Muhammad is His Messenger*, 39.

... he [Abī'l-Khayr] would flee to mountains and wilderness, where he was sometimes seen roaming with a venerable old man clad in white raiment... [who as] he declared [later] was the prophet Khaḍir.⁶²

Besides the symbolism which revolves around the figure of Khidr himself, the story of Moses and Khidr is full of other imageries and divine allusions. First of all there is a mention of the fish which is a symbol of knowledge;⁶³ then there is mention of water, a symbol of life, as well as the sea, symbolizing the limitless immensity and vastness of knowledge, especially esoteric knowledge.

Further, the symbolism reaches its height in the fish's disappearance in a "parting of the sea", symbolizing the meeting of the two domains of knowledge, viz., the esoteric and the exoteric. Now this fish (wisdom) was to be Moses' breakfast, which is precisely what Moses needed before he understood the subtlety of the events which occurred while he was with Khidr. The fish was dead when it was with Moses and Joshua, only to become alive soon after, thus suggesting the need for them to follow its 'way to knowledge.'

The reason why Joshua may have forgotten to tell Moses about the disappearance of the fish is yet another sign alluding to the divine mystery. Regarding this Shāfi' says: Maybe he (Joshua) forgot due to the reason that his thoughts wandered away thinking about his homeland, since he is in travel.⁶⁴ The twist here is in the link between the symbolism of the 'fish' (a way of knowledge) which is being carried during the travel (*jihād*: one of the means of knowledge) in order to arrive (understand) the "meeting of the two oceans" (the perfect knowledge). The two oceans, once again, are parallel to the two kinds of knowledge, the exoteric (that of Moses) and the esoteric (that of Khidr); 'perfect knowledge' is the coming together of the two.⁶⁵ Furthermore, travel is inevitably linked with the attainment of divine wisdom. Hence another aspect of Khidr, as patron-saint of travelers, is highlighted in the tradition. However, whatever may be the reason for Joshua's forgetfulness, it certainly seems to contain yet another moral for the humankind.

In his case the 'forgetting' was more than forgetting. Inertia had made him refrain from telling the important news. In such matters inertia is almost as bad as active spite, the suggestion of Satan. So new knowledge or spiritual knowledge is not only passed by in ignorance, but sometimes by culpable negligence.⁶⁶

⁶² Nicholson, *Studies in Islamic Mysticism*, 13.

⁶³ "Fish is the emblem of the fruit of secular knowledge" A. Yusuf Ali, *Holy Qur'an* (Lahore: 1938), 747 n. 2408.

⁶⁴ Shāfi', *Ma'arif al-Qur'an*, 592.

⁶⁵ "The salt sea of this world represents, like Moses, exoteric knowledge, whereas the Waters of Life are personified by al-Khidr." See Martin Lings, *Symbol and Archetype: A Study of the Meaning of Existence* (Cambridge: Quinta Essentia, 1991), 75.

⁶⁶ Yusuf Ali, *Holy Qur'an* (Lahore: 1938), 748 n. 2410.

Overall, the episode of Khidr in the Qurʾān is a reflection and representation of the paradoxes of life. Above all, it symbolizes the delicate balance between "patience and faith as they were enjoined"⁶⁷ on Moses after he understood the meaning of those paradoxes explained to him by Khidr himself.

What is implied by the story is that such wisdom is only attainable by the will, mercy, and grace of God, and that even the prophethood and bearing of the divine law could not bring that "most subtle knowledge" because it is "only known to him who has become the instrument of God."⁶⁸

[Moses was shown these events] to illustrate the manner in which God may provide contrivances or reconditionings for the benefit of His creatures. Then God uses one of His servants as an instrument for the accomplishment of an intended operation . . .⁶⁹

Thus is Moses given a lesson by God about the infinitude of knowledge, with subtle but momentary knowledge belonging to Khidr, but universal knowledge to Moses.

(The fact of the matter is that) provisions of the law bear on universal principles...whereas contrivances bear on affairs conducive to a particular prudence . . . All this is a most subtle knowledge . . . [Thus Moses] comes to understand precisely the underlying idea of events . . .⁷⁰

As it may be said here, there is a sense of Khidr being 'superior' to Moses. Based on that, one may suggest that there are "glimmerings of a theophany" in the personage of Khidr who as God's servant is as human as Moses, yet seems to be embodied with the divine attributes of "God's mercy [*rahma*] (eternal salvation) and...Divine knowledge (eternal prescience)."⁷¹ Symbolically it may imply that Moses' encounter with Khidr is actually his encounter with the aspects of the Divine in an attempt to equip him (i.e. Moses) with the infiniteness of knowledge. As Netton has rightly said, it may all be summed up as a "Divine Testing" of Moses.⁷²

The legend of Khidr is an excellent example of the fact that human beings constantly need to seek the union with God in Whom all knowledge rests. Since there is no end to the divine knowledge it is unwise to assume, as Moses did, that one may know it all.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* See summary on p. 727.

⁶⁸ Baljon, *Mystical Interpretation of Prophetic Tales*, 41.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 40-41.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* Similarly, for Vollers the main issue is theodicy: What may seem wrong to us (in Khidr's actions) can be right in God's judgement.

⁷¹ Netton, "Theophany as Paradox," 12.

⁷² *Ibid.*

The episode in the story of Moses is meant to illustrate four points . . . that wisdom [does] not comprehend everything, even as the whole stock of the knowledge of the present day, in the sciences and the arts, and in literature . . . [is accumulated] (if it could be supposed to be gathered in one individual). (2) Constant effort is necessary to keep our knowledge square with the march of time. (3) There is a kind of knowledge [like the one Khidr represents] which is in ever in contact with life as it is actually lived. (4) There are paradoxes in life: apparent loss may be real gain; apparent cruelty may be real mercy...[and that] Allah's wisdom transcends all human calculation.⁷³

In conclusion, it is to be noted that the symbolism of Khidr has traveled far and beyond the geographical as well as ideological boundaries of its origin. The 'legend' has truly lived up to its universal quality as it spreads across a variety of cultures and civilizations around the world. In the subcontinent folklore Khidr has appeared "as a substitute for the Hindu gods of the water and is particularly revered by sailors and fishermen."⁷⁴ It is in connection with Khidr being a patron-saint of sailors that his name is invoked down to this day by the sailors every time a boat is being launched in parts of the Middle East and Northern India.⁷⁵

Today Khidr can be found in the verses of Iqbal,⁷⁶ in the poems of Rumi, and 'Attar. He has immensely influenced the lives of many a mystic, ascetic and man of God throughout the history of Islam, such as 'Abd al-Karim al-Jili, Ibn 'Arabi, Mansur al-Hallaj and so on. In the Muslim tradition Khidr is alive and well and continues to guide the perplexed and those who invoke his name.

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⁷³ *Holy Qur'an* (Madinah: 1410 A.H.), 838; A. Yusuf Ali, *Holy Qur'an* (Lahore: 1938), 747.

⁷⁴ Currie, *The Shrine and Cult*, 10; cf. Friedlaender, "Khidr" *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, 695.

⁷⁵ Friedlaender, *op cit*.

⁷⁶ As in "Asrar-i-Khudi" and other poems.

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A PARABLE OF BLESSING: THE SIGNIFICANCE AND MESSAGE OF THE QUR'ANIC ACCOUNT OF 'THE COMPANIONS OF THE CAVE'

The Parable of "The Companions of the Cave" in Context

The eighteenth chapter of the Qur'an, entitled "The *Sūra* of the Cave" (*Sūrat al-Kahf*), has long been recognized among Muslims to be a goldmine of spiritual riches and guidance for those who would recite it, contemplate it, and thereby plumb the depths of meaning contained therein. Its virtues are extolled in a number of *ḥadīths*. According to one of these, this *sūra* was "spread abroad by 70,000 angels." Another proclaims that "whoever recites the *sūra* of the Companions of the Cave on Friday will have all of his sins forgiven until the following Friday, plus three days more, he will be given light that reaches to Heaven, and he will be protected from the temptations of the Anti-Christ (*al-dajjāl*)."¹ Al-Tha'lab relates on the authority of Samurah ibn Jundub that the Prophet once said, "Whoever recites ten verses of *Sūrat al-Kahf* from memory will not be harmed by the wiles of the Anti-Christ, and he who recites the entire *sūra* will enter Paradise."² Moreover, given that the crowning miracle of Islam "is not the incarnation of God, but a book,"³ the central importance of this *sūra* may be seen in the striking parallel drawn by one author between the Friday recitation of *sūra* 18 and the Christian liturgy of the Eucharist. "In Islam the Body is the book, and the part that represents the whole is *sūra* 18."⁴

Sūra 18 begins with an introductory section which sets forth the themes which recur throughout the *sūra* as a whole. The focus of the present study is the parable of "the Companions of the Cave" (*ahl al-kahf*) in verses 9-26. This parable is followed by a series of exhortations to the Prophet concerning truth-telling, forbearance toward believers, and promises of rewards to the faithful (vv. 27-31), after which he is urged to relate another parable (*mathal*) concerning

¹ These are attributed by al-Qurtubi to Ishāq ibn 'Abdallāh ibn Abi Farwah (Abu 'Abdallāh Muhammad ibn Aḥmad al-Anṣārī al-Qurtubi, *Al-Jāmi' li Ahkām al-Qur'an*, Vol. 10 [Cairo: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabi li al-Ṭibā'ah wa al-Nashr, 1967], 346)

² *Ibid.*

³ Norman O. Brown, *Apocalypse and/or Metamorphosis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 91.

⁴ *Ibid.*

a man who, failing to recognize the finitude of his earthly wealth, lost all that he had (vv. 32-44). This is followed by another interlude depicting the Day of Judgment, and a warning against taking God's parables and signs in vain (vv. 45-59). The third parable (vv. 60-82) depicts Moses undertaking a journey which brings him into an encounter with a young man, through whom God teaches the Prophet humility in the face of divine wisdom beyond his comprehension. In the fourth and last parable (vv. 83-98) we read of a figure referred to as "the Two-Horned One" (*Dhū al-Qarnayn*), an earthly ruler to whom God grants a special role in protecting others from evil and in preparing for the Day of Judgment. This is then followed by a final warning of judgment to those who set their hopes on the present life and an exhortation to do good works (vv. 99-110).

In his Introduction to this *sūra*, 'Abdallāh Yūsuf 'Alī describes it as "a lesson on the brevity and mystery of life."⁵ A similar observation is made by another writer, who sees the entire *sūra* as revolving around a single theme, namely "the struggle between faith and materialism."⁶ Based on repeated references in the *sūra* to "the glitter of this life" (*zīnat al-ḥayāt al-dunyā*, referred to in verses 7, 28 and 46, in addition to a reference simply to "this life" in v. 104), Sa'īd Ḥawwā draws a connection between this *sūra* and a verse in *sūrat al-Baqara* in which we are told that this world has been caused to "glitter" for the unbelieving (Q.:2-212). The present *sūra's* underlying theme, as he sees it, is that of undermining "the glitter of this life" which prevents people from fully "entering Islam," that is, worshipping God as sole Provider and living out of a proper concern for the afterlife.⁷

Norman O. Brown, on the other hand, sees *sūra* 18 as epitomizing the long-lived controversy within Islam "between literalism and mysticism in the interpretation of the [Qur'ān]. . . between surface and substance, between *ẓāhir* and *bāṭin*,"⁸ which is in turn related to "the distinction between *ta'wīl*, the symbolic and hermeneutic interpretation of the inner meaning, and *tafsīr*, the literal explanation of the external aspect of the Book."⁹ Brown goes on to point out that "*sūra* 18 became the basis for the elaboration of a distinction between prophecy and another transcendent or esoteric kind of wisdom . . . represented by, on the one hand, the Sufi master (*pir*) and, on the other, the Shī'ite imam," the former representing "a principle of authoritative guidance

⁵ 'Abdallāh Yūsuf 'Alī, *The Holy Qur'ān: Text, Translation and Commentary* (New York: Tahrike Tarsile Qur'ān, 1938), 727.

⁶ Abu al-Ḥasan al-Nadwi, *Al-Sūra bayna al-Imān wa al-Maddiyyah. Ta'ammulāt fī Sūrat al-Kahf* (Cairo: al-Mukhtār li al-Ṭibā'ah wa al-Nashr, 1977), 10.

⁷ Sa'īd Ḥawwā, *Al-Asās fī al-Tafsīr*, Vol. 6 (Cairo: Dār al-Salām li al-Ṭibā'ah wa al-Nashr, 1989), 3149.

⁸ Brown, *op. cit.*, 81.

⁹ *Ibid.*; Brown makes reference here to Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Ideals and Realities of Islam* (New York: Praeger, 1967), 58-59.

in interpretation of the revelation" and the latter, "a principle of mystic illumination which supplements the legislative or imperative mood of prophecy."¹⁰

"Esoteric wisdom" of the kind referred to by Brown is epitomized in the encounter between Moses and the mysterious personage identified as "one of Our servants" (v. 65) from whom he seeks guidance in verses 65-82 of *sūra* 18. This figure was later named by Muslim traditionists and commentators *al-Khidr*, "the Green One," and was looked upon by Sufis as a source of many of their experiences of illumination.¹¹ Moses thirsts for guidance from this one who has been gifted by God with sacred wisdom (vv. 65-66); yet their interaction vividly illustrates the gulf between divine and human ways. As predicted by this servant of God, Moses finds great difficulty in "being patient" with the wisdom which this servant reveals to him (see vv. 67, 72-73, 75, 78-82). Thus, despite his solemn pledge not to resist him (v. 69), Moses doubts this servant of God three times: first questioning his morality (vv. 71, 74), then marvelling at his great moral stature and generosity (v. 77).

The central place which this figure came to occupy for Sufi mystics was such that "the rendezvous of Moses and Khidr becomes the prototype of all those later mystic voyages in the company of a spiritual guide."¹² On this basis, Brown suggests the possibility of a mystical interpretation of the account of the "Companions of the Cave" as well, and asks whether this episode is, as both Christian and Muslim literalists have maintained, a "proof" of the resurrection, or whether it calls for "a mystical—i.e., nonliteral—interpretation," their sleep being a symbol "of saintly or eremite withdrawal from the world, taking refuge with Allah. . . that condition of being lost in God which characterizes the saint (*wali*) as distinct from prophet (*nabi*). . ."¹³ Such an understanding of the text would be opposed by Muslim reformers such as Rashid Riḍa, who tend "to banish *ta'wīl* in favor of *tafsīr*," in part because of the ease with which subjective interpretations of the text can be misused for the purpose of promoting partisan interests or viewpoints.¹⁴

However, we must not lose sight of the importance of seeing both types of interpretation as valid, of recognizing the distinction between *ẓāhir* and *bāṭin*, *ta'wīl* and *tafsīr* without insisting on their mutual exclusivity. For surely the surface meaning, or *ẓāhir*, can and does coexist with the inner meaning, or *bāṭin*. By assuming that the two are mutually exclusive, we deny ourselves a

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 81-82.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 81-83; see also A. J. Wensinck, "Al-Khidr," *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd Edition (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 902-905 (thenceforth, EI2).

¹² Brown notes that Henry Corbin's book on Sūfī master Ibn 'Arabi, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabi* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969) "is organized around two questions - Who is Khidr? What does it mean to be a disciple of Khidr?" (Brown, *op. cit.*, 83)

¹³ *Ibid.*, 85.

¹⁴ Merad, A., "Islāh," EI2, 147; see also Rashid Riḍa, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Hakīm al-Shahīr bi Tafsīr al-Manār*, Vol. 3 (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah, 1970), 177.

great part of the richness of any religious text—not to mention plunging ourselves into painful, though perhaps needless, controversies. Such an exclusivist view no doubt lies behind the insistence of some on condemning all *ta'wīl* which claims to see “a hidden sense beyond the literal” and which restricts Qurʾanic exegesis to *tafsīr*, or “simple literalist commentary.”¹⁵

Given the possible implications of such a controversy for our understanding of the account of “the Companions of the Cave,” let us now turn to a consideration of its possible origins and treatment by Muslim commentators. The “Companions” refer to a group of seven youths whose story is described as being among God’s “signs” (v. 9). After relating a summary version of their story in verses 9-12, God then reveals the events to the Prophet in greater detail: These were youths who had “believed in their Lord” (v. 13), and who therefore refused to worship other gods as their people had begun to do (vv. 14-15). They were then commanded by God to betake themselves to “the cave,” where He would show them mercy and provide for all their needs (v. 16). Once there, God caused a deep sleep to overcome them for many years (v. 11), then raised them up. When they awoke, they thought they had only been asleep for a day or less, and they sent one of their number to the city to buy food, urging him to be careful lest they be discovered and forced to return to the pagan religion of their people (vv. 19-20). Eventually, however, God caused them to be discovered in order that people “might know that the promise of God [of the Resurrection] is true” (v. 21). When people speculated as to how many youths there actually were, the Prophet was urged not to enter into disputes over such matters (v. 22). Finally, we are told that they remained in the cave for 300 (or 309) years (v. 25), and we are reminded that God—the One Who alone possesses the secrets of the unknown—knows best how long they stayed (v. 26).

The Qurʾanic account is believed to have its roots in a story of Christian origins known as the story of “the Seven Sleepers.” Abū al-Ḥasan al-Nadwī notes that this account had been a favorite among Christians as a testimony to the fortitude of Christ’s first followers, the strength of their faith, and their willingness to make great sacrifices for their beliefs and principles.¹⁶ Based on elements of the story shared in common among the most ancient written sources, al-Nadwī relates the Christian story as follows,

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 84.

¹⁶ Al-Nadwī, *op. cit.*, 25. In his article entitled “The Seven Sleepers” (*The Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. 11, Ed. James Hastings [New York: Charles Scribners’ Sons, 1961], 428-430), I Guidi expresses the belief that the story reached Muḥammad either directly or indirectly via the oral tradition preserved by Christian monks. In support of this supposition are: (1) a notable resemblance between the account of the Seven Sleepers and a well-known homily of a Syrian monk by the name of James of Serugh, and (2) the harmonious relations which prevailed in early Islam between Muslims and Christian Syrians.

The Emperor Decius enters the ancient Greek city of Ephesus and revives the tradition of idol-worship, ordering all the city's inhabitants, and the Christians in particular, to offer the gods sacrifices. A number of Christians, however, refuse to recant their beliefs, among them seven young men (some accounts mention eight) who refuse to offer sacrifices to the gods despite the threat of torture and persecution. The Emperor gives them a grace period in which to return to their senses, and leaves the city. Meanwhile, the youths betake themselves to a nearby mountain known as Anchilus, after which one of them (named Diomedes or Iamblichus) returns to the city disguised in soiled and patched garments to catch up on the city's news and buy food. Soon thereafter, Decius returns to the city and orders that the youths be presented to him. Diomedes informs the others of the Emperor's order and they are overcome with fear and anxiety. However, God causes a deep, long sleep to overtake them. When the Emperor fails to locate them, he interrogates their parents, who confess that they have hidden on Mount Anchilus, whereupon the ruler orders that the cave in which they are ensconced be blocked off with huge rocks. After this, two Christians (Theodor and Rufinus) write down the youths' story on a tablet, which they place under the stones with which the cave has been sealed. There then pass 307 years, and during the reign of Emperor Theodosius II, there is a revolution led by a clergyman who denies the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, a matter which quite disturbs the Emperor. Meanwhile, God inspires a certain landowner to build an enclosure for his sheep in the region near the cave where the youths are sleeping, and the builders happen to use the stones with which the cave has been sealed. God then awakens them, whereupon Diomedes goes out according to custom to get food. But when he reaches the gateway of the city, he is astonished to find a cross inscribed thereon, so much so that he has to ask a passerby if this is truly the city of Ephesus. Upon entering the city and attempting to buy food with currency from the time of Decius, he is accused of hoarding an unearthed treasure, which nearly causes a riot and leads a crowd to begin abusing him. He is then questioned by the Bishop (who is also the ruler of the city), to whom he tells his story and whom he invites to come see his companions in the cave. The Emperor is informed as well, and when he arrives at the cave, one of the youths tells him that God has caused this deep slumber to overtake them in order to prove to him the truth of the Resurrection. The youths then die their final death, and a Roman temple is built in remembrance of them.¹⁷

Regarding the historicity of the account of "the Seven Sleepers," al-Nadwi states that even leading historians do not doubt the possibility of its occurrence due to its fame and its detailed thoroughness among Christians, and its

¹⁷ Al-Nadwi, *Ibid.*, 26-29.

having been passed down from generation to generation.¹⁸ However, the historicity of the legend has been questioned, for example, by Baronius (d. 1607), then by Tillemont and others. Up until the late 19th Century, it was generally considered to be of Greek origin, but in 1886 Noldeke brought forward evidence that the Greek was a translation of an original Syriac text. Among the considerations in favor of viewing the story as being of Syriac origin are: (1) that the earliest texts of any length are Syriac, dating back to the late 5th Century, and (2) the fact that topographical data included in the story are not accurate for Ephesus.¹⁹ Nevertheless, whether or not the story passed down was historically accurate, the "memory" of the Companions of the Cave was widely celebrated with veneration and respect in the Christian East in gatherings for the Lord's Supper and in other religious observances.²⁰

Al-Nadwī notes that Ṭabarī and other early Muslim commentators made reference to this story as well. However, he believes their accounts to contain errors due to the lack of circulation of Christian sources in their era, as well as their ignorance of Roman history before Christianity became the official state religion.²¹ And in fact, an examination of the commentaries of Ṭabarī and others on this portion of *Sūrat al-Kahf* reveals the existence of a plethora of variant Muslim elaborations on the account of "the Seven Sleepers." One of the most detailed of these is attributed by Ṭabarī to Ibn Ishāq, who mentions such things as the remains of believers killed by the pagan emperor being hung on the city gates.²² He also goes into considerable detail concerning the encounter between the youth sent to the city to buy food and the townspeople who accuse him of concealing a treasure he has unearthed.²³ Moreover, he mentions the king's wanting to build a gold coffin for each of the Companions, after which it is revealed to him in a dream that they should be allowed to return to the soil in order for God to raise them from the same. He then has a single coffin made for them of teakwood.²⁴

An account attributed to Mujāhid incorporates further details not mentioned by Ibn Ishāq, including features contradictory to those of Ibn Ishāq's version. For example, he describes the idolatrous king as being blinded to the youths' whereabouts when he seeks to locate them.²⁵ In addition to such dif-

¹⁸ Al-Nadwī attributes to Edward Gibbon the statement that the account cannot be attributed merely to the Greeks' superstitions or religious excesses (*Ibid.*, citing Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Vol. II (Modern Library Giant Series, USA, Publisher [?], year[?]), 241-243).

¹⁹ Guide, *op. cit.*, 430.

²⁰ al-Nadwī, *op. cit.*

²¹ *Ibid.*, 29.

²² Abu Ja'far Muḥammad Jarir al-Ṭabarī, *Jam' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl al-Qur'ān*, Vol. 15 (Cairo: Maktabah wa Maṭba'ah Muṣṭafā al-Bābīlī wa al-Ḥalabī wa Awlādihi, 1954), 201.

²³ *Ibid.*, 219-220.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 220.

²⁵ Ismā'īl ibn 'Umar Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aṣm*, Vol. 14 (Beirut: Dār al-Andalus, 1966), 372.

ferences of detail among the accounts of the Seven Sleepers as transmitted by Ibn Ishāq and Mujāhid, we find that Ṭabarī relates on the authority of Wahb ibn al-Munabbih a wholly different account of how the Companions ended up in the cave,

There came a Christian believer to the city where the youths lived. He wanted to enter the city, but he was told that on the city gate there was an idol which, if he wanted to enter, he would have to bow down to. He then came to a public bathhouse near the city, and found employment there. The owner of the bathhouse considered his establishment a great boon, as it brought him a good income. The believer then began to establish friendly relations with the owner, setting forth to him his religious faith. Then some of the youths attached themselves to him, and he began to speak to them of heaven and earth and the afterlife until they too became sincere believers. Meanwhile, the Christian employee stipulated to the bathhouse proprietor that at night, nothing was to prevent him from performing his ritual prayers even if he were at the bathhouse. Things continued thus until one day, the king's son came to the bathhouse and sought to enter with a woman. The Christian upbraided him, saying "You, the king's son, come in with this troublesome woman?!" He was embarrassed and left; however, he returned again. The Christian said the same thing to him, but this time the king's son cursed him and drove him away, and entered with the woman after all, and while inside, both of them died. The king then came and was told, "The bathhouse proprietor has killed your son." He was then searched for, but he had escaped. The king then asked who had been accompanying the man, and they [apparently those on the scene] named the youths. They were thus pursued, and left the city. As they were fleeing, they passed by the farm of a friend who was also a believer.²⁶ They mentioned that they were being pursued, and the farmer's dog took off with them. By nighttime they had arrived at the cave, which they entered saying, "Let us spend the night here, then in the morning, God willing, we shall see what to do." They were then overcome with sleep. Meanwhile, the king came out with his companions in pursuit, and found the youths having entered the cave. But every time any of the king's men sought to enter the cave, he was filled with terror, and thus none of them could bear to go in. Then someone said to the king, "If you could, would you not kill them?" He replied, "Indeed I would!" To which the other responded, "Then seal the door of the Cave and leave them inside, that they might die of hunger and thirst." And thus he did.²⁷

²⁶ The phrase I have rendered "who was also a believer" is *wa huwa ala mithli amrihim*.

²⁷ Al-Ṭabarī, *op. cit.*, 204-205, a shorter version of this account is found in al-Qurṭubī, *op. cit.*, 359-360.

The important thing to note here is not so much the particular details in which the various accounts differ, but rather, certain observable patterns which may point to the reasons for which these accounts came to have their present form. That is, the extra-Qur'anic variations on "the Seven Sleepers" appear to be attempts, albeit inconsistent ones, to adapt originally Christian traditional accounts to fit Qur'anic exegesis.²⁸ The patterns referred to above which indicate that such a process may have taken place are: (1) instances in which there is an odd juxtaposition of Muslim and Christian references within an account, and (2) the intrusion of Qur'anic phrases into the accounts related by Muslim authors.

In illustration of the first pattern observed, one finds that in the account attributed to Wahb ibn al-Munabbih concerning the reason for the youths' flight to the Cave, a man originally referred to as a Christian believer (*ḥawārī Ḍa'ud ibn Maryam*) is described a few lines later as expounding the Islamic religion to the bathhouse owner (*fa ja'ala ya'ridu 'alayhi al-islām*),²⁹ as if the transmitter wanted to "Islamicize" the account as it were, but only did so spottily. In a version of the account attributed to 'Ikrima, the youths are said to have embraced Islam rather than Christianity, and the "righteous" king during whose reign they are raised up is said to be a Muslim rather than a Christian.³⁰ Similarly, in an account related by Ṭabarī, the youths are said to have been persecuted for their Muslim faith (*kānū yukhḥfūn al-islām khawfan min malikihim*), despite the fact that Decius ruled in Ephesus prior to the time of Islam. Moreover, he mentions only a few lines later that they were in fact Christians (*al-ḥiya kānū 'alā dīn al-masīḥ*).³¹

A related collocation of Muslim and Christian references can be seen in Ibn Ishāq's account where the youth sent into the city to buy food after the Companions' long slumber comes to the city gates and finds thereon "a sign for the faithful" (*alāma takūnu li ahli al-imān*).³² We know from the Christian versions of the account that this was a sign of the cross.³³ However, the youth notes to himself that only the previous evening "the Muslims were hid-

²⁸ That this Christian story had somehow made its way into Muslim lore is indicated by the fact that al-Zamakhshari, for example, introduces the mention of "the tyrant ..Decius" (*al-jabbār wa ḥuṣṣa Diqyānūs*) without considering it necessary to make any explanatory reference to the Christian story to which he is alluding, and this in spite of the fact that the Qur'ān says nothing of such a ruler. See Maḥmūd ibn 'Umar al-Zamakhshari, *al-Kashshāf 'an Haqā'iq al-Tanzil wa 'Uyūn al-Aqāwīl wa Wujūh al-Ta'wīl*, Vol. 2 (Cairo: Maktabah wa Maṭba'ah Muṣṭafā al-Bābili wa al-Ḥalabi wa Awlādihi, 1966), 474.

²⁹ Al-Ṭabarī, *op. cit.*, 205.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 216-217; an account attributed to 'Abdallāh ibn 'Ubayd ibn 'Umayr also speaks of the second king as a Muslim (*Ibid.*, 222).

³¹ Abū 'Alī al-Faḍl al-Ḥasan al-Ṭabarsī, *Majma' al-Bayān fi Tafsir al-Qur'ān*, Vol. 5 (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, n.d.), 452. Al-Zamakhshari (*op. cit.*, 474) likewise states that God strengthened the youths to publicly manifest their Muslim faith (*al-taẓāhur bi al-islām*).

³² Al-Ṭabarī, *op. cit.*, 218.

³³ Al-Nadwi, *op. cit.*, 28; Guidi, *op. cit.*, 428.

ing this sign" (*kāna al-muslimūn yukhfūna hādhihi al-ʿalāma*).³⁴ It is clear, nevertheless, that he must in fact be referring to Christians, because when he goes into the city "he hears many people swearing by the name of ʿĪsa ibn Maryam (*fa yasmaʿu unāsan kathīran yaḥlifūn bi ismi ʿĪsa ibn Maryam*).³⁵

As for the intrusion of Qurʾanic phrases into the accounts related by Muslim writers, one observes, for example, that in the account attributed by Ṭabarī to Mujāhid, the phrase used to describe the youths' being overcome with sleep is the same as that used in verse 11 of *Sūrat al-Kahf*, namely that God "drew a veil over their ears" (*daraba ʿalā ʿadhānīhim*).³⁶ In the alternative account attributed to Wahb ibn al-Munabbih, the same phrase, albeit in the passive voice, is encountered again.³⁷ In addition, the same account twice mentions the youths' dog "spreading out his forelegs by the door of the cave," which is nearly the exact wording of verse 18, whereas no mention is made in Christian accounts of their being accompanied by a dog. Another departure from Christian sources which suggests Qurʾanic influence can be seen in the account of Wahb ibn al-Munabbih according to which, when the unbelieving king and his men went in pursuit of the fleeing youth, every one of them who sought to enter the Cave was so "struck with terror" (*urʿiba*) that he could not enter.³⁸ The verb *urʿiba* is reminiscent of verse 18, where we are told that if anyone were to have seen the sleeping Companions, he would have been "filled with terror."

Hence, the two phenomena observed in accounts of "the Seven Sleepers" as related by Muslim writers, namely the juxtaposition of Muslim and Christian referents and the introduction of Qurʾanic phrases into the accounts, reflect what appear to have been attempts to take stories which arose initially within a Christian context, and adapt them in such a way that they would lend greater meaning to the Qurʾanic accounts.

However, although this manner of transmitting religious lore may appear somewhat haphazard by Western standards of history, we would do well to bear in mind Andrew Rippin's observation concerning the nature of another type of account which has figured prominently in Muslim exegetical literature, namely, "occasions of revelation" (*asbāb al-nuzūl*). Rippin notes that such accounts "are adduced, and thus recorded and transmitted, in order to provide a narrative situation in which an interpretation of the Qurʾān can be embodied. The material has been recorded not for its historical value but for its exegeti-

³⁴ Al-Ṭabarī, *op. cit.*, 218

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 219.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 203.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 205.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

cal value. . . ."³⁹ The matter of the historicity of materials employed in the interpretation of the Qurʾān is taken up also by Paul Nwyia in a discussion of the manner in which narratives of Jewish and/or Christian origin have at times been incorporated into Muslim thought. In a study of Qurʾānic interpretation in the mystic tradition, Nwyia states that,

Schooled in the [Qurʾān], Muslim consciousness is spontaneously ahistorical, that is to say mythic. . . . When Muslim consciousness takes up for its own ends an event borrowed from the Bible or Judeo-Christian hagiography, it in most cases cannot resist effecting a transvaluation by introducing fabulous details or otherwise transforming the meaning. Passing from one hand to another in a chain of Muslim transmission the historical event evaporates and all that is left is a vague memory submerged in a story which has become mythic.⁴⁰

In a similar vein, Muslim reformer Rashīd Riḍa rejects attempts to base Qurʾānic truth on historical veracity, stating that the Qurʾān "is no more a historical work (*taʾrikh*) than a narrative work (*qasas*): it is only a moral guide and a source of edification."⁴¹ On this view, what matters is not so much "what happened" as what moral guidance and truth can be derived from the text. A similar attitude may be reflected in the fact that after the statement that the youths remained in the cave for 300 (or 309) years, we read God's command to the Prophet, "Say: God knows best how long they stayed; with Him is (the knowledge of) the secrets of the heavens and the earth. . . ." (vv. 25-26). It is as if to say: such matters of historical occurrence are not of as great import as we may imagine.

At the same time, the clearly evident concern of so many Muslim commentators to "fill in the gaps" when the Qurʾānic account does not provide a continuous narrative of events (cf. the discussion below on the abrupt transition from v. 20 to v. 21) bespeaks an understandable—indeed, one might say universal—desire to know "what happened," whether it concerns how many Companions there were, how long they stayed in the Cave, how they came to be accompanied by a dog, when or how they finally died, etc. There may in fact be some degree of tension in the Muslim tradition between, on one hand, the Qurʾān's unspoken disdain for continuous, detailed narrative (as if to drive

³⁹ Andrew Rippin, "Literary Analysis of *Qurʾān*, *Tafsir*, and *Sirā*: the Methodologies of John Wansbrough," in Richard C. Martin, Ed., *Islam in Religious Studies* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1985), 153.

⁴⁰ P. Nwyia, *Exégèse Coranique et Langage Mystique* (Beirut: 1970), 74; quoted in Brown, *op. cit.*, 87.

⁴¹ Merad, *op. cit.*, citing Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsir al-Qurʾān al-Hakīm al-Shahīr bi Tafsir al-Manār*, Vol. 2 (Cairo, 1934), 47.

home the message of the finitude of human knowledge)⁴² and, on the other, the human desire to make everything explicit, to tie up loose ends as it were, in short, to know "what happened." Such a desire would seem to be inseparable from a concern for historical accuracy.

Thus, certainly not everyone would agree that "Muslim consciousness" is necessarily characterized by the "ahistorical" bent which Nwyia and Riḍa attribute to it.⁴³ Similarly, there are those who would differ with Rippin's view of the questionable historicity of "occasions of revelation." Be that as it may, one particular "occasion" believed to provide the basis for God's revelation of *Sūrat al-Kahf* has long been firmly established in Muslim tradition. According to this account, attributed to Ibn Ishāq, the leaders of Quraysh sent two men, al-Naḍr ibn al-Hārith and 'Aqaba ibn Abi Mu'ayt, to inquire of the Jewish religious leaders (in view of their being "the people of the first book," *ahl al-kitāb al-awwal*) regarding questions by which they might test Muḥammad's prophethood. The Jews sent them back with three questions to address to the Prophet. The first concerned "youths belonging to the first era" (*fitya dhahabū fi al-dahr al-awwal*) who had an amazing story; the second concerned a man roaming the world, east and west; and the third concerned the nature of the Spirit. If he answered them correctly, they were to follow him as a Prophet. Otherwise, they were to consider him an imposter (*mutaqawwil*) and do with him as they saw fit. Upon returning to Mecca, they addressed the three questions to Muḥammad, who promised to give them an answer the following day. The Apostle spent fifteen nights waiting for a revelation, but was given nothing. The people of Mecca then began to spread rumors, complaining about the delay, and Muḥammad himself was grieved by the revelation's being withheld from him.⁴⁴ Finally, Gabriel brought him a *sūra* containing the account of the Companions of the Cave, the itinerant man (referring to the parable

⁴² In this connection, Brown describes "the strangely abortive and incoherent character of the pseudonarratives in sūrah 18" as reflecting a characteristic of the entire Qur'ān, namely, as rejection of the "linear organization of time, revelation and history" which has come to characterize orthodox Christianity and Western thought. This is an attitude which has at times resulted in an outright rejection of narrative itself. The Kharijites, for example, were so adamant on this point that they rejected sūrah 12 (*Sūrat Yūsuf*) on the grounds that "narrative has no place in revelation." (Brown, *op. cit.*, 87; reference is made to W. Montgomery Watt, *Bell's Introduction to the Qur'ān*, [Edinburgh, 1977], 46.).

⁴³ Despite the inclusion of legendary material and folklore in a number of Muslim commentaries there are also prominent Muslim commentators who condemn the use of such material to "embroider" the Qur'anic text. Belonging to the genre referred to as *Isrā'iliyyāt*, such narratives are looked upon with disapproval by such figures as Ibn Qutaybah, Ibn Kathir and Muḥammad Rashid Riḍa (See G. Vagda, "Isrā'iliyyāt," *EL*, 211-212 and A. Merad, "Iṣlah," *EL*, 147.)

⁴⁴ As for the reason behind this delay, it is related that when the Prophet promised to answer their questions on the next day, he failed to add, "God willing" (*insha'Allah*). (Al-Qurṭubī, *op. cit.* 347) See discussion below on verses 23-24.

concerning Moses' journey), and God's statement, "If they ask you about the Spirit, say, 'The Spirit is an affair of my Lord's. You know but little.'"⁴⁵

Al-Nadwī maintains that this account provides neither the only nor even the primary reason for the Qur'ān's inclusion of this story. In his view, there must have been reasons more compelling than the questions of a given sect or group. In this regard the author quotes with approval from a Persian exegete who criticizes those who seek to explain every verse of the Qur'ān having to do with disputation or judgments (*āyāt al-mukhāṣṣama wa'l aḥkām*) as a response to a particular event. Rather, the primary purpose for which the Qur'ān was revealed is to instruct the human soul and to do away with false doctrine and corrupt works,⁴⁶ and does not require a particular event during the Prophet's lifetime to justify or explain its inclusion in the Qur'ān.

The Parable of the Companions of the Cave: Commentary

Given the above background, let me turn now to commentators' discussions of particular verses, which shed further light on the passage's structure and meaning. It may be observed that verses 9-12 present a kind of overview of the Companions' story, while verses 13-26 develop the account in more detail. Verse 9 opens with a question directed by God to the Prophet: "Or dost thou reflect that the Companions of the Cave and of the Inscription were wonders among our signs?" Most commentators take this verse as an implicit denial that the events to follow describe a miracle greater than any of God's other wonders and signs. Al-Qurṭubī sees the opening interrogative conjunction "if" (*am*) of this verse as linking it back to verse 6, where God has chided the Prophet for taking upon his own shoulders others' rejection of his message, and being disheartened by the delay of the anticipated revelation.⁴⁷ By denying the extraordinary nature of the events to follow, it is as if God were asking the Prophet, "Do you really imagine this matter to be so amazing or powerful

⁴⁵ Al-Ṭabari, *op. cit.*, 191-192; this is related also in al-Nadwī, *op. cit.*, 40-41. Commenting on this account, Saʿīd Ḥawwā raises the question: "If the story of the Companions of the Cave concerns a group of Christ's followers, then it is odd that the Jews would have been the ones to pose a question about them (given the conflicts between Christians and Jews). But given that it is about Christ's followers, and given the reliability of the account as related by Ibn Ishāq, then it is not unlikely that the leaders of Quraysh asked both the Jews and the Christians. In this case, the Christians may have posed this particular question, and there may have been confusion on the part of the *ṣāwī*. After all, the person from whom Ibn Ishāq heard the account was an unknown shaykh, which may affect the strength of the account" (Saʿīd Ḥawwā, *op. cit.*, 3148-49).

⁴⁶ Al-Nadwī, *op. cit.* 40-43, citing Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥīm, *Al-Faṣṣāḥ al-Kabīr fī Usūl al-Tafsīr*. (Al-Nadwī, who has translated the passage from the Persian, provides neither a page number nor other bibliographical data.)

⁴⁷ Al-Qurṭubī, *op. cit.*, 356; ʿAbdallāh Yūsuf ʿAlī translates verse 6 as follows: "Thou wouldst only, perhaps, fret thyself to death, following after them, in grief, if they believe not in this message" (*faḥaʾallaka bakhīʿun nafsaka alā athārihum in lam yuʾminū bi ḥadtha al-ḥadithi asafan*). In

in and of itself that, if you only related it to those without faith, they would believe?"⁴⁸

Ṭabarī, on the other hand, points out that in light of the Prophet's distress over the unbelief of Quraysh as described in verse 6, the mention of the Companions in verse 9 serves as a source of consolation, the message being that God is able to preserve the faithful in spite of the unbelief of others.⁴⁹ Moreover, if what happened to the Companions is no more amazing a sign than other works of God, then this merely strengthens the consoling power of the message, since what God did for and through these youths is a sign of what He can do for others who believe as well.

As for the term rendered "the Inscription" (*al-raqīm*), there are numerous interpretations of its meaning, ranging from the plausible to the farfetched. To Anas ibn Mālīk is attributed the view that it refers to the Companions' dog,⁵⁰ while others have proposed that it refers to the city from which the youths came.⁵¹ A view with somewhat greater plausibility is that it refers to the valley in which the cave was located, the name having been taken from *raqma*, which has been defined as the place in a valley where water flows and changes direction (*makān jari al-mā' wa in ṣāfihi*).⁵² The most plausible view, however, is that which associates the term with something written. The verb *raqama* means "to write," and a number of commentators hold the view that it refers to a stone or lead tablet on which the youths' story and names were written and then placed near the cave or elsewhere.⁵³ Related to this interpretation is the view that *al-raqīm* refers to written documents taken by the youths to the cave, which may have included the Old and New Testaments.⁵⁴

The next verse of note is verse 16, in which God tells the youths to flee to the Cave for refuge, distancing themselves from the idolatrous practices of their people. In this command al-Qurṭubī finds support for the practice of

illustration of the power of the phrase *bākhūn nafsaka*, al-Ṭabarī cites the following verse from Dhū al-Rummah:

O you who whose soul is filled with suicidal passion
Over something which Fate has wrested from your hands. . .

(Al-Ṭabarī, *op. cit.*, 194; see *Diwān Shīr Dhi al-Rummah*, Carlyle H. Mackenzie, Ed. [Cambridge, 1919], 251.)

⁴⁸ See al-Ṭabarsī, *op. cit.*, 452. Al-Qurṭubī (*op. cit.*, 356) notes the wide agreement of scholars on the interpretation of this question as an implicit negation, citing Ibn 'Abbās, Mujāhid, Ibn Qatādah, Ibn Ishāq, and al-Ṭabarī.

⁴⁹ Al-Ṭabarsī, *op. cit.*, 452-453.

⁵⁰ Al-Qurṭubī, *op. cit.*, 357; see also al-Zamakhsharī, *op. cit.*, 473.

⁵¹ This view is attributed by al-Ṭabarī (*op. cit.*, 198).

⁵² This view is attributed by al-Ṭabarī (*op. cit.*, 198-199) to Ibn 'Abbās and al-Duḥāk, and by al-Qurṭubī (*op. cit.*, 357-358) to Mujāhid.

⁵³ In support of this view, al-Ṭabarī (*op. cit.*, 199) notes that the word *raqīm* follows the morphological pattern of *ṣā'il bi mā'na ma'wāl* as in *jarih/majrūh*, *qat'il/muqtul*, thus yielding the sense of something written (*raqim/margūm*).

⁵⁴ Al-Nadwī (*op. cit.*, 57), who supports this view, attributes its origin to Ibn 'Abbās.

fleeing when one is in danger because of one's faith. He cites the example of the Prophet, who sought refuge in Medina after being persecuted for his faith by the tribe of Quraysh, as well as a phrase from *Sūrat al-Naḥl* (16:21), which states that God "has made the mountains into refuges for you" (*wa ja'ala lakum mina al-jibāl aknān*). Al-Qurṭubī takes the word *aknān* to refer to mountain caves where believers could seek solitude, and in this regard notes the Prophet's former practice of spending nights worshipping in the Cave of Ḥirā'. Thus, the cave to which the Companions flee is likened both to the cave where Muḥammad once went for solitude and worship, and to the city of Yathrib to which the Muslim community migrated for protection from their persecutors.⁵⁵ In this way, verse 16 is seen as reflecting the conditions faced by Muslims in Mecca during the persecution which they suffered at the hands of Quraysh.⁵⁶

Another verse around which a great deal of discussion has revolved among commentators is verse 18, where we are told that if we were to see the sleeping youths, we would think they were awake rather than asleep. This has aroused speculation suggesting that their eyes were prevented from closing to protect them from decay (*li'alla yusri'a ilayhā al-balā*).⁵⁷ We are also told in this verse that God turned the youths over from one side to the other, giving rise to conjectures as to why this would have been done. The view attributed to Ibn 'Abbās is that this was to prevent the earth's wearing away their flesh.⁵⁸ Commentators have even speculated as to the frequency with which the "turning" took place: twice a year (Abū Hurayrā), once every seven years (Mujāhid), or only during the last nine years of the 300 (Firqaḥ).⁵⁹

The next feature of this verse which has captivated the imaginations of commentators is the mention of "their dog stretching forth two forelegs on the threshold." This simple phrase has invited seemingly endless speculation and elaboration concerning the dog's name and color, how it came to be in the cave, as well as the spiritual moral behind the dog's inclusion in the account. Most commentators are agreed that it was an actual dog, although this too has been a point of contention. Some have proposed that it was a dog belonging to the king's chef, who had been persuaded of their religion and had joined them,⁶⁰ or that they simply passed by it on their way to the cave, after which it followed them there.⁶¹ Others have claimed that it was actually a human being, described as a dog because of the position in which he was sitting as he guarded

⁵⁵ Al-Qurṭubī, *op. cit.*, 360.

⁵⁶ Al-Nadwī, *op. cit.*, 43.

⁵⁷ Ibn Kathīr, *op. cit.*, 373.

⁵⁸ Al-Ṭabārī, *op. cit.*, 214.

⁵⁹ Al-Qurṭubī, *op. cit.*, 370.

⁶⁰ Al-Ṭabārī, *op. cit.*, 214.

⁶¹ According to an account related by al-Zamakhsharī (*op. cit.*, 477), the youths chased the dog away at first but God gave it utterance and it said, "What do you want of me? I love those beloved to God, so sleep and I will watch over you."

the door.⁶² As for the possible spiritual significance of the dog's inclusion in the account, one explanation is attributed to Abū al-Faḍl al-Jawharī who, preaching in Cairo in 469 A.H., said, "He who loves the righteous receives the same blessing that they do; [likewise] a dog who loved and accompanied people of virtue was mentioned by God in His masterful revelation." Al-Qurṭubī adds that if such was the case for a dog, how much more should it apply to sincere believers who associate with the righteous and saints!⁶³

The final three lines of this verse tell us that if anyone had looked upon the Companions, he would have fled, filled with terror. Al-Qurṭubī asks: Is this because of the desolate nature of the place? Did God bring them to such a location to keep others away? Was it due to their long hair and fingernails? Al-Qurṭubī rejects this latter suggestion since the youths said upon awakening, "We have stayed a day or part of a day," which suggests that there were no such physical manifestations of the passage of time.⁶⁴ Ṭabarī believes that the terror was due to the awesome dignity with which God had clothed them, in order that no one might reach them or touch them until their destiny was fulfilled (*ḥattā yablagha al-kitābu fihim ajalahu*) by God's own power and authority awakening them at the time He willed, making them an example to others.⁶⁵

Verses 19 and 20 depict the awakening/resurrection of the sleeping youths, whereupon they begin to question one another as to how long they have been in the cave. Being unable to determine the answer to this question, they turn to matters of more immediate concern and send one youth to the city to buy food, with the stipulation that he be careful not to give them away to the townspeople lest they be forced to join in their people's idolatrous practices.

The extra-Qur'anic accounts referred to earlier have elaborated extensively on the youth's expedition to the city with the money which, unbeknownst to him, will reveal the very long stay he has had in the cave, since the currency can be seen to come from another era. In the phrase *fa-yanẓur ayyuhā azkā ta'āman*, rendered by 'Abdallāh Yūsuf 'Alī as "let him find out which is the best food to be had," Ṭabarī interprets the term *azkā* to mean not simply "best,"

⁶² This latter view is mentioned by al-Qurṭubī (*op. cit.*, 372), who refutes it by saying that it would be inconsistent with the Prophet's command, "Let no one spread out his arms as a dog spreads out its forelegs" (*wa-lā yabsiṭ aḥadukum dhira'ayhi inbisāt al-kalb*). No source is mentioned for this *ḥadīth*.

⁶³ Al-Qurṭubī, *op. cit.*, 371-372.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 373.

⁶⁵ Al-Ṭabarī, *op. cit.*, 215. In connection with these three lines, al-Zamakhsharī (*op. cit.*, 476) relates the following anecdote about the Caliph Mu'āwiyah ibn Abi Sufyān, who reportedly "had invaded Rome, and on passing by the cave, said, 'If only these [youths] would be revealed to us so that we might look at them. . . .' Ibn 'Abbās (may God be pleased with him) replied, saying, 'That shall not be granted to you; God has forbidden this even to those who are better than you. If you looked upon them, you would turn away from them in flight.' Mu'āwiyah then said, 'I will not give up until I know their secret (*ḥattā 'alamā 'ilmahum*)' He then sent people to the cave, saying, 'Go, look [at those inside]. They did so, and upon their entrance into the cave, God sent a scorching wind upon them which consumed them."

but "purer, more ritually acceptable" in view of the fact that meat previously sacrificed to idols might have been sold in the markets. He also notes that in the phrase *ayyuhā*, the feminine suffix refers to the city, which is being used metonymously to speak of the city's inhabitants. Hence, the intent is for him to see who in the city sells food which is purer, more "*ḥalāl*" as it were.⁶⁶

The youth sent into the city is to go about his errand cautiously, perhaps even covertly (*wa liyatalattaf*) so as not to give away his companions (*fa lā yush'iranna bikum aḥadan*), thereby exposing them to renewed persecution. The youths are reminded (or remind one another) in verse 20 that if those who worship other than God come upon them, they will stone them or bring them back into their idolatrous religion, in which case the youths will never attain well-being or "salvation" (*falan tufliḥū idhan aḥadan*). Al-Qurṭubī sees this passage as illustrating the practice of *taqiyya*, i.e. concealment of one's faith under duress.⁶⁷ Ṭabarī, commenting on the same passage, brings up a belief (for which he mentions no source) that "whoever is forced to act as if he did not believe is still 'saved.'" However, he sees a conflict between this belief and the statement in verse 20 that if the youths are brought back, even by force, to their people's idolatrous religion, they will "never be saved." He thus proposes that the meaning intended is that the people would simply seek to win them back by appealing to them rather than by force. If this is the correct interpretation, then a basis for the practice of *taqiyya* under severe pressure could possibly be found in this verse. However, he also suggests that perhaps at that time the practice of *taqiyya* was not yet recognized.⁶⁸

In verse 21, people other than the Companions enter the narrative, although their identity is not explicitly stated. We read that God has caused others to become aware of the youths in the cave "so that they might know that the promise of God is true" and that "there is no doubt about the Hour. . .," due to some kind of dispute going on among the people concerned. Perhaps in answer to questions concerning the nature of this dispute, Ibn Ishāq's account of the Companions mentions that among the subjects of the righteous king during whose reign the youths were raised up, there had arisen a dispute concerning the nature and reality of the Resurrection, with some claiming that the spirit is raised without the body, and others claiming that the body also is resurrected.⁶⁹ Moreover, this dispute so grieved the king that he went to God in sackcloth and ashes, seeking a sign to clarify matters. In answer to his prayers, God inspired a shepherd to build an enclosure for his sheep, and in so doing he removed the rocks with which the cave had been sealed. This

⁶⁶ Al-Ṭabarī, *op. cit.*, 223-224.

⁶⁷ Al-Qurṭubī, *op. cit.*, 376.

⁶⁸ "*Yajūzu an yakūna fi dhālika al-waqt kāna la yajūzu al-taḳiyyah fi iẓhār al-kufr.*" (Al-Ṭabarsī, *op. cit.*, 457.)

⁶⁹ Al-Zamakhsharī, *op. cit.*, 217; al-Ṭabarī, *op. cit.*, 217.

made it possible for the youths' situation to become known, and was seen to be the sign sought by the king, a proof of the reality of bodily resurrection.⁷⁰ Hence the phrase "that they might know that the promise of God is true" is taken to refer to God's promise to raise the dead on Judgment Day.

In the second part of verse 21, we read that the dispute also had to do with what kind of structure to build over the Companions, some advocating "a building" (*bunyan*) and others "a place of worship" (*masjid*). Given that mention has just been made of God making their matter known to others, and of this being a sign of the Resurrection, these lines appear to follow quite abruptly on what precedes, since they imply that the Companions have died, though the Qur'an makes no explicit mention of this. Ṭabarī attributes to Ibn 'Abbās the view that the Companions did in fact die, and that the structure in question was to be a kind of tomb. It is related that when the king entered the Cave with others, addressing questions to the Companions, the youths fell down dead. A variant account is that when the youth sent for food returned and informed them of how long they had been in the cave, they asked God to return them to their former state, which He did.⁷¹

Given that the proposed *bunyan* was in fact to be a kind of tomb, there may be a connection between this and the dispute over the Resurrection. That is, the perceived purpose may have been to guard and preserve the soil surrounding them (*turbatahum*) from people who might otherwise enter the cave, in anticipation of their being physically resurrected. Al-Zamakhsharī notes that the "soil" of the Prophet was similarly preserved within an enclosure (*ḥazīra*).⁷² If this is true, however, it is difficult to understand why al-Zamakhsharī identifies only the opposing group—those advocating the *masjid*—as being Muslims. And in fact, there has been debate among commentators over whether this second group were justified in what they proposed. The focal point of the dispute is a ḥadīth attributed to 'Ā'ishah, who said, "May God curse the Jews and Christians! They have made the graves of their prophets and saints into places of worship."⁷³ Al-Qurṭubī states that the reason for this condemnation of building mosques on gravesites was the fear

⁷⁰ At-Ṭabarī, *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Al-Ṭabarī, *op. cit.*, 460. Al-Ṭabarī attributes this account to Qatādah. He also notes the belief of some that the Companions will not die till the Day of Resurrection (*qila innahum la yamūtūn illā yawma al-qiyāmah*). This should perhaps be understood as another way of saying that they will never die, since to die on Resurrection Day would seem to be a contradiction in terms. In this connection, al-Qurṭubī (*op. cit.*, 388) notes the belief that the Companions are still asleep somewhere, miraculously preserved. He relates a ḥadīth attributed to Ibn 'Atiyyah on the authority of Firqah, according to which the Prophet said, "Let Jesus son of Mary make the pilgrimage to Mecca with the Companions of the Cave, since they have not done so yet."

⁷² Al-Zamakhsharī, *op. cit.*, 477.

⁷³ "La'nat Allāh 'alā al-nasārā wa al-yahūd ittakhadhū qubūr anbiyā' ihim wa ṣālihūhim masājida." (Ibn Kathir, *op. cit.*, cited in al-Nadwi, *op. cit.*, 62.)

that it would lead to the worship of the dead.⁷⁴ However, Ḥawwā observes that the intent may simply have been to locate the *masjid* at the door of the cave (rather than directly over it), in which case he believes it would not have been prohibited. He also notes the fact that the Prophet's grave was treated similarly.⁷⁵ Whatever the case may be, verse 21 leaves us with the impression that the latter group prevailed, and hence that it was the *masjid* which was built at the site.⁷⁶

In addition to the disagreement over what type of structure to build over or near the cave, we read in verse 22 of a further dispute over how many Companions there were. Mention of such a dispute conflicts, however, with extra-Qur'anic accounts which tell us that people actually entered the cave and saw the youths after their "resurrection." Perhaps it was such an inconsistency which caused Qatāda to mention in his version that once the Companions had been taken back into their former state, God caused those searching for them to lose their way so as never to reach them,⁷⁷ for in such a case a dispute over how many of them there were would be more likely to arise. According to lines 1 and 2 of verse 22, some said there were three Companions, the fourth being their dog, others that there were five, the sixth being their dog. However, these statements are described as being mere conjecture (*raġman bi al-ghayb*). Still others said that there were seven, the eighth being their dog. This is followed by a command to the Prophet, "Say, God knows best their number. Only a few know their (real case)."

According to Al-Zamakhsharī, this was a debate among the People of the Book, on the one hand, and Muslim believers, on the other. These groups asked the Prophet about the number of youths in the cave, but he delayed replying until he had received a revelation on the matter. Eventually it was revealed to him that there were seven, accompanied by their dog. According to an account attributed to Ibn 'Abbās,

Al-Sayyid, al-ʿAqib and their friends from Najrān [an area of Yemen] were with the Prophet when mention was made of the Companions of the Cave. Al-Sayyid, a Jacobite, said, 'There were three, and the fourth was their dog.' Al-ʿAqib, a Nestorian, said, 'There were five, and the sixth was their dog.' The Muslims, however, said, 'There were seven, and the eighth was their dog.' And God confirmed the opinion of the Muslims. They learned this from the Prophet, who received it from the angel Gabriel (upon him be peace).⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Al-Qurṭubī, *q. cit.*, 379-380.

⁷⁵ Ḥawwā, *q. cit.*, 3172.

⁷⁶ Guidi notes that "according to the legend, a church was erected above the cave by the emperor Theodosius" (11:429). (Guidi, *q. cit.*, 429)

⁷⁷ Al-Ṭabarsī, *q. cit.*, 460.

⁷⁸ Al-Zamakhsharī, *q. cit.*, 478.

Al-Zamakhsharī sees further evidence for the correctness of the third reply in the fact that the first two figures proposed are described as mere speculation, whereas the third is not. He interprets the phrase, "It is but few that know their (real case)" (*lā yaʿlamuhum illā qalīl*) as referring to the People of the Book, that is, to Jews and/or Christians. In other words, the People of the Book may say this or that about the Companions of the Cave, but very few of them have certain knowledge of the matter.⁷⁹

The next two verses, namely verses 23 and 24, could best be described as an "interlude" in the account of the Companions, albeit an interlude related to the surrounding context. Shifting away from the focus on the Companions of the Cave, we read a divine command to Muḥammad, "Do not say of anything, 'I shall be sure to do so and so tomorrow' without adding, 'So please God!'" Ḥawwā suggests that this reprimand to the Prophet was placed here within the context of the story of the Companions of the Cave in order to make it more memorable, "that it might remain etched into the Muslim conscience."⁸⁰ Moreover, nearly all commentators interpret the reprimand with reference to the "occasion of revelation" related above in which a delegation is sent to the Prophet to test him with questions, since he failed to conclude his promise to answer them the next day with the words, "God willing."⁸¹ An alternative interpretation of verse 23 is offered by Ṭabarī, who takes it to mean, "Do not say, 'I will do such and such tomorrow' unless it is the will of God." That is, one should not promise to do anything except that which he or she knows to be within the realm of obedience to the divine will.⁸²

Following this injunction we encounter another: "And call thy Lord to mind when thou forgettest . . ." (*wa'dhkur rabbaka idhā nasīta*). Some commentators have taken this to mean that if one makes an oath without remembering to say, "In Shā' Allāh", then later remembers his omission, he should correct the omission by saying "In Shā' Allāh" even up to a year after

⁷⁹ There seems to be an odd juxtaposition of past and present in these two verses, since the dispute over the number of Companions as depicted here is occurring among the Prophet's contemporaries. Otherwise, God would not say to the Prophet, "Say, God knows best their number." The dispute over what kind of structure to build, on the other hand, could only have taken place during the era of the Companions, since by the Prophet's time, no one was any longer in agreement as to where the events surrounding the youths had taken place. Regarding commentators' speculations over the location of the cave, Ḥawwā quotes with approval Ibn Kathīr's observation that "God alone knows what country it is in, and if there were religious benefit to be gained from such knowledge, God would have revealed it to the Prophet and to us." (See Ḥawwā, *op. cit.*, 3165 and Ibn Kathīr, *op. cit.*, 373.)

⁸⁰ "... li tabqā hādhihi al-qadiyyah maḥfūrah fi al-damir al-muslim " (Ḥawwā, *Ibid.*, 3173)

⁸¹ Al-Ṭabarī, *op. cit.*, 229; al-Qurtubī, *op. cit.*, 347. In this connection, al-Zamakhsharī (*op. cit.*, 480) relates a quip attributed to 'Atā' who said, "One should say 'In shā' Allāh' as profusely as a full-breasted she-camel gives forth when milked." (*Yustathnā 'alā miqdār halbi nāqatin ghazīrah.*)

⁸² Al-Ṭabarī (*op. cit.*, 461) says that he prefers this interpretation because he believes it requires less reading into the text. (*Hādha wajh hasan yutābiq al-zāhir wa lā yuhtaju fihī ilā binā' al-kalām 'alā maḥdhūf*)

the oath was made. Ṭabarī goes further than this to say that in fulfillment of what is commanded in this verse, one should go back and say "In Shā' Allah" even after having broken one's oath.⁸³ Ibn Kathīr concurs that the "In Shā' Allah" needs to be uttered even if one only remembers the omission an entire year after giving one's word; he goes on to add, however, that if the oath has been broken, this does not nullify the breaking of one's word nor make penance (*al-kaffāra*) unnecessary.⁸⁴

The Qur'anic account of the Companions concludes with reference to the period which they spent in the Cave. We read in verse 25: "So they stayed in their Cave three hundred years, and (some) add nine (more)." This is followed in verse 26 by a command for the Prophet to speak: "Say, God knows best how long they stayed. With Him is (the knowledge of) the secrets of the heavens and the earth."

Of note with regard to these verses is Edward Gibbons' observation that the period between the reigns of Decius (249-251 A.D.) and Theodosius II (408-450 A.D.) is no more than 200 years. Therefore, he has scoffed at the figure of 309 years given by the Qur'an.⁸⁵ Consequently, some modern Muslim exegetes have claimed (as had commentators prior to the era of Gibbon) that the period given in verse 25 was put forward by Jews and/or Christians (*ahl al-kitāb*), the reason being that if it had been a statement of God's, there would have been no appeal to divine knowledge with the statement, "Say, God knows best how long they stayed. . . ."⁸⁶ The view that the statement concerning the 300/309 years in verse 25 was actually a statement of the Jews is based on Ibn Mas'ūd's recension, which adds the phrase "they said. . . ." (*qālū*) to the beginning of verse 25.⁸⁷ However, this view is rejected by a number of commentators.

Ṭabarī, for example, notes that without the *qālū* included by Ibn Mas'ūd, there is no evidence that the 300/309-year period refers to what a particular group said; thus it should not be attributed to anyone but God.⁸⁸ In agreement with Ṭabarī, Ibn Kathīr argues that Ibn Mas'ūd's reading is not widely attested,⁸⁹ and insists that the numbers given in verse 25 were revealed by God to the Prophet. Some added nine years to the three hundred because for every one hundred years, the solar and lunar calendars differ by three. Hence, three

⁸³ Al-Ṭabarī, *op. cit.*, 229-230.

⁸⁴ Ibn Kathīr, *op. cit.*, 379. Al-Ṭabarsī (*op. cit.*, 461) cites alternative interpretations of this phrase, e.g. that of 'Ikrimah: "Remember your Lord if you become angry by asking for forgiveness, that the anger may pass from you," and that of al-Duhāk: "Perform your prayers later if you forget."

⁸⁵ Al-Nadwi, *op. cit.*, 32; no page number from Gibbon is cited. Al-Nadwi notes that Guidi gives a figure of 307 years. (Guidi, *op. cit.*, 428)

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 32-34.

⁸⁷ This view is attributed to Qatādah, Muṭṭarīf, and Ibn 'Abdallāh; see Ibn Kathīr, *op. cit.*, 380 and al-Ṭabarī, *op. cit.*, 230.

⁸⁸ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ibid.*, 232.

⁸⁹ *Ḥiya' shādhidhah bi al-nisbatu ilā qirā'at al-jumhūr.* (Ibn Kathīr, *op. cit.*, 380).

hundred years by the solar calendar equal three hundred and nine years by the lunar. Those who added the nine years would thus have been the Muslims who, unlike the Christians with whom the account originated, relied on the lunar calendar.⁹⁰

As for the words given to Muḥammad, "Say, God knows best . . .", this was a reminder to the Prophet that if he was asked about such matters and did not have revealed knowledge concerning them, he should not venture to speak. Ibn Kathīr also notes that he is supported in this view by a number of his predecessors. Finally, Ṭabarī observes that God clearly wants us to conclude from this verse how amazing His power and ability are; however, this cannot occur unless we know how long they actually stayed in the Cave. Hence, he concludes, what is intended by "Say, God knows best how long they stayed . . ." is that based on God's perfect knowledge, He has revealed how long the Companions remained in the cave. It is this upon which the Prophet is to rely, and nothing else.⁹¹

Thus, rather than seeking to explain away the Qur'anic figures of 300/309 years as the conjectures of Jews or Christians, al-Nadwī responds to Gibbons' objections by approaching the matter historically. Specifically, he maintains that it is unlikely that Decius, who reigned only from 249 to 251 A.D., was responsible for the persecution mentioned in the story of the Seven Sleepers. For not only was his reign very short, but he was occupied for most of it with wars against the Goths, at whose hands he met his end. Moreover, there is no historical record of his having gone to Greece during his reign.⁹² Moreover, among the names listed by historians of Christian leaders punished by Decius for not obeying his decree, those of the Companions do not appear. Therefore, al-Nadwī thinks it more likely that the persecution and disappearance of "the Seven Sleepers" took place under the reign of Hadrian Publius, of whom it is mentioned that he undertook a tour of the "eastern states" between 129 and 134 A.D. and that he insisted on holding onto Roman pagan religion.⁹³

Returning to the Qur'anic text, we find the passage concluding with a further affirmation of God's unsurpassable knowledge and power, both of which have been illustrated in the preceding account of the Companions of the Cave. Thus we read in the final lines of verse 26: "How clearly He sees,

⁹⁰ See al-Qurtubi, *op. cit.*, 387.

⁹¹ Al-Ṭabarsī, *op. cit.*, 463.

⁹² Al-Nadwī, *op. cit.*, 34-35; he refers the reader to the account of Decius's death at the hands of the Goths in *The Historian's History of the World*, Vol. 16 (London, 1908), 413.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 37. Some Muslim commentators, albeit a small minority, have even expressed doubts as to whether the Companions lived during the Christian era. Ibn Kathīr, for example, states that if they had been Christians, the Jewish leaders would not have cared to preserve their story. Hawwā (*op. cit.*, 3167) also believes that the account may go back to pre-Christian times and that Christians simply attributed the story to themselves. However, the bulk of the evidence does not appear to support this view.

how finely He hears . . . ! They have no protector other than Him; nor does He share His command with any person whatsoever."

Conclusion

The plethora of varying accounts of the Companions' story to be found in Qur'anic commentaries attests to the powerful attraction of this narrative and its capacity to arouse the heart, the mind, and the imagination. Moreover, given the role of the Jewish leaders in the account which has served as the "occasion of revelation" for *sūra* 18, as well as the prominent place occupied by the story of the "Seven Sleepers" in Eastern Christian liturgy prior to Islam, the account of "the Companions of the Cave" bears testimony to the vital interaction between the three monotheistic faiths. In the Jewish tradition, the theme of a "long sleep" can be found in the Talmudic legend of Onias (Honi) Ha-Me'aggel, and in the story of Abimelech, whom God caused to sleep for 66 years that he might not have to witness King Nebuchadnezzar's destruction of the Temple.⁹⁴ In the Christian tradition, the theme of resurrection is of such vital prominence that one may say, "if Christ has not been raised, then . . . your faith is in vain."⁹⁵ As a demonstration of God's power and His commitment to the well-being of those who trust in Him, Christ's resurrection embodies not only believers' hope in their own bodily resurrection, but also their confidence of receiving spiritual life and earthly sustenance as they rely steadily on God to "supply every need" both in this life and the next.⁹⁶

Viewing the Islamic tradition as an outgrowth and continuation of the Judeo-Christian revelation, one may likewise take to heart the spiritual lessons conveyed by the Qur'anic narrative of the Companions of the Cave. As has been noted, reference is made in verse 7 of this *sūra* to God's making the earth "a glittering show" as a test of people's determination to do good works. Ṭabarī draws attention to the fact that the Companions were among those who have left the world's "glitter," including wealth, home and family, in order to be true to their faith in God.⁹⁷ This reference to the world's "glitter" is followed in verse 8 by the affirmation that God will transform what is on earth into a barren expanse (*ṣā'idan juruzan*), thus showing that the "glitter," being temporary and evanescent, is not worth clinging to. This theme can be seen to find expression in the parable of the Companions of the Cave, whether their long sleep and subsequent revival is understood as a demonstration of the reality of bodily resurrection, or as a symbol of "saintly . . . withdrawal

⁹⁴ Guidi, *op. cit.*, 429-430.

⁹⁵ I Corinthians 15:14. (*The Holy Bible*, Revised Standard Version, New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1953).

⁹⁶ Philippians 4:19, *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ Al-Ṭabarsī, *op. cit.*, 452-453.

from the world." One may adhere to the first interpretation, to the second, or to both; in either case, the message conveyed by this account remains fundamentally the same: that those who heed the moral of the parable by living out of the conviction that this world's "glitter" is not of lasting value are assured of passing the "test" presented by the world's attractions, and of receiving God's blessing and provision as did "the Companions of the Cave."⁹⁸

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⁹⁸ See Hawwā, *op. cit.*, 3153-54, who sees the entire account of the Companions as a development of the themes presented in verses 7 and 8.

ISLAM IN EUROPEAN THOUGHT.
BY ALBERT HOURANI, CAMBRIDGE: CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS, 1991. 199 PP. INDEX.

We are indebted to Albert Hourani for having written on a great variety of Middle Eastern, Arabic, and Islamic themes. His stunning masterpiece, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939*,¹ written almost thirty years ago, is an indispensable source for those who wish to acquaint themselves with the intellectual history of the modern and contemporary Arab world and North Africa. Since his early days at Oxford University as a young intellectual and lecturer up until his recent death, Albert Hourani, a Lebanese Christian growing up in British Palestine, had been totally engaged in the intellectual issues and problems of the Arab and Muslim world. In his *A History of the Arab Peoples* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), published a few months before the book under review appeared, Hourani takes upon himself, in the words of an eminent reviewer,

To write a history of the Arabs as distinct from that of the other peoples with whom their affairs have been inextricably entwined [which] is no easy matter. Since the seventh century and the advent of Islam, when the Arabs emerged from the Arabian peninsula to conquer an empire in the Middle East, North Africa, and beyond, the history of the Arabs has been inseparable from the history of Islam.²

In the same vein, Hourani tackles a theme that is of value to Arabs, Muslims, and other Third World people who fell under European domination and colonialism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: namely, the impact of Western hegemony on Eastern cultures, and, in our case, the cultures of the Muslim world. His insights into how European thinkers and travelers of the early modern period represented Islam and Muslims in their writings are still relevant to the current and complex relationship between the Muslim world and the West.

¹ Professor Donald M. Reid comments on Hourani's work as follows: "Albert Hourani's survey of 'The Present State of Islamic and Middle East Historiography' [in Albert Hourani, *Europe and the Middle East*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980] has one obvious lacuna: it fails to mention the author's own *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939*. This masterpiece, published in 1962 when its author was forty-seven, has left its mark on a whole generation of English-speaking scholars of the Middle East." Donald M. Reid, "Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age Twenty Years After," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 14(4), November 1982, p. 541.

² Shaul Bakhash, "In Search of the Arab Soul" *The New York Review of Books*, Vol. XXXVIII [15], September 26, 1991, p. 51

One of Hourani's major goals in this book is to explicate the historical development and the intellectual substance of modern-day orientalism. In this he roughly follows the outline laid down by Edward Said in his classic work, *Orientalism*. Nevertheless, Hourani does not agree with some of the main conclusions of Said. Edward Said presents the notion that "orientalism" is a type of knowledge constructed for the purposes of dominating the "Orient," which is in this case Islam. Said defines the term as a number of interdependent things: 1) It is an academic tradition. This refers to institutions and scholars who study the East, be they historians, philologists, or theologians. 2) It also refers to a style of thought based a distinction made between the Orient and the Occident—that the Orient is the "other." 3) It is also a Western type of knowledge that aims at dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient. "Mr. Said," Hourani contends, "is right to say that 'orientalism' is a typically 'occidental' mode of thought, but perhaps he makes the matter too simple when he implies that this style of thought is inextricably bound up with domination, and indeed is derived from it." (p. 63)

It is true, Hourani maintains, that Western scholarship on Islam was motivated politically, and certain images of Islam as a backward and totalitarian religion, were, and are still, reflected in the writings of many a Western scholar. But this was not the case with serious orientalists, since people like, "E. G. Browne in England was a supporter of the constitutional revolution in Iran, Louis Massignon of the Algerian movement for independence; others, such as Hurgronje, used what influence they had in favor of a more sensitive and understanding attitude towards those whom their nations ruled." (p. 38)

Therefore, Hourani invites us, implicitly at least, to reexamine Edward Said's basic formulations, theses, and conclusions and study the relationship between Islam and the West in, perhaps, a more positive fashion than does Said. It is true that at the level of religious encounter, Hourani argues, Islam was a problem for Christian Europe. But it is also true that another no less important attitude was at the center of interaction between Christianity and Islam, and, later on, between secular Europe and the world of Islam: a deep exchange of ideas. During the formative phase of Islam, distinguished Muslim theologians and thinkers, such as Ali Tabari, Imam al-Ghazali, and Ibn Hazm wrote major works in an attempt to refute the central doctrines and tenets of Christianity. There is no doubt that ascendant Islam then presented a religious, intellectual, and political challenge to Christendom. The world of "Islamdom", to use one of Hourani's favorite terms, was in the process of expansion at all levels. As a result, Christianity ceased to exist as an organized political, and economic force in the Middle East and North Africa, and, for a good period of time, in Spain. Christians felt the Islamic menace deeply, and, therefore, some of them were compelled to study the reasons behind the success of the Muslim world, and the ramifications of the universally-oriented Islamic scholarship—

on their lives as the backward "other." Isn't the Muslim world in a similar position today? Hourani ponders this question, and proposes that because of modern Western political and cultural hegemony, better understood as colonialism, Arabs and Muslims were compelled to have a critical look at the nature of their decline, and formulate an appropriate religious, scientific, intellectual, and cultural response to the multifaceted Western challenge.

In discussing the emergence and intellectual formation of modern Orientalist scholarship, Hourani points to two major characteristics of nineteenth century orientalism in particular: 1) positivism, and 2) missionary training and outlook. In the first instance, positivism, as a Western [American and European] scientific movement, encouraged the orientalist to gather (useful) data and information on the Orient, its history, theology, philosophy, and culture. In the second instance, however, missionary training gave the orientalist a clear religious conviction and a specific mission: conversion of non-Christians, who were usually perceived as inferior to the white European Christians. The missionary-orientalist devoted his energy to two major areas of study: the Qur'ān and Muḥammad.

Also, the nineteenth century witnessed the rise of a new type of orientalism, one that was less religious and somewhat more liberal than its predecessor. This orientalism is best exemplified by two main figures: Ernest Renan (1823-92), a French Catholic, and Ignaz Goldziher (1850-1921), a Hungarian-born Jewish scholar. Hourani argues that although Renan lost his inherited catholic faith, he "retained a basic seriousness in his search for truth." (p. 28) Renan fell under the spell of the school of philology, and basically believed that one could study a universal religion through the study of its basic terminologies, concepts, myths, and worldview. Ignaz Goldziher, on the other hand, grew up in the secular liberal environment of Hungary in the 19th century, and though he was a highly secularized and assimilated Jew, he retained a concern for the study of Judaism as a monotheistic tradition. He believed it was possible to study Judaism through studying the living spirit of Islam. He opted to study Islam by examining two major principles: 1) the *shari'ah*, and 2) the balance Islam struck between *shari'ah* and *taṣawwuf*. The spirit of Islam, Goldziher maintained, was based on a vision of "creating and maintaining a balance between the law, the articulation of God's word into precept for action, and mysticism, the expression of the desire for holiness." (p. 41)

Underlying Hourani's discussion of Orientalism is the notion that it [Orientalism] is a complex, empirical, pragmatic, religious-, and political-oriented movement. A wise scholar, therefore, can not overlook its wide scholarly activities, and its research into the origins of Islam, history, and theological structure and formation. In this regard, Hourani echoes the words of the late Fazlur Rahman (d. 1988), a distinguished Pakistani scholar at the University of Chicago, who realized the potential of orientalism, as well as the short-

comings of modern-day Muslim scholarship. To Rahman, writes Hourani, "The main work of the history of Islam...has been done by Western scholars, but the task should now be that of Muslims themselves." (p. 56)

Hourani considers H.A.R. Gibb as the best representative of twentieth century Orientalism. Gibb, who was deeply committed to bringing out in various writings and discussions the salient features of classical and modern Islamic intellectual history, was an immense intellectual figure, who represented a living force in British academia at the time. As "[t]he last of the universal Arabists," Gibb argued on behalf of applying the most developed social science concepts and methods in Islamic studies. In addition to his profound understanding of Islamic intellectual history, as "elite culture," i.e. the product of the Islamic literati class, Gibb endeavored to bring to light the great transformations, changes, and movements in the life of the Muslim community and the life of common people. One example is the study of sufi *ṭarīqas* and their impact on Muslim societies. To Gibb, as well as to Hourani, Sufism has always represented vital forces in Islamic societies, past and present. In a sense, Hourani implies that the study of the "elite culture" in Islam is insufficient, since it can not shed enough light on the dynamics of "popular culture" and its often unnoticed contributions to the life of the Muslim community. In discussing orientalism, one cannot escape the feeling that Hourani himself is part of this great *silṣila* [chain] of learning. Hourani concludes his discussion of Gibb by saying that he was an intellectual and spiritual *murshid* [guide] if not a *qutb* [pole] of oriental learning. In his portrayal of T. E. Lawrence and Louis Massignon, Hourani is very sympathetic. He considers both of them as lost European souls searching for meaning in the desert of the Orient. Hourani maintains that "for both...this world was somehow a forbidden one: they had a sense of exile, of loneliness in a desolate country, of seeking something which visible forms could not give." (p. 118) Also, "For both of them, life and travel in the world of Islam was the experience by which they became aware of themselves." (p. 118) They sought a decisive confrontation with themselves, a subjective self-examination, if you will, as a means of discovering the "alien self" in their lives. Although Hourani thinks that Lawrence imposed a high sense of literary order on his *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (London: 1935), Massignon's work is more exceptional and lasting. The latter displayed concern with the plight of Third World people, especially Muslims, and was distinguished by sharp intelligence, deep compassion, and great humility.

In chapter three, "Marshall Hodgson and the Venture of Islam," Hourani pays tribute to the intellectual achievements of the late American historian and orientalist, Marshall Hodgson (d. 1968). Hodgson wrote *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization*, 3 volumes (Chicago: 1974). As an historian, his vocation derived from the experience he gained from Western and Muslim historians alike. That is why Hourani compares

the first volume of Hodgson's *Venture to Ibn Khaldūn's Muqaddimah*. According to Hourani, Hodgson believed in the ability of creative individuals in changing collective realities and conditions. The idea of a "creative minority," in Hodgson's view, is not bound to a particular class, but is of an independent social and intellectual formation, and it is the only group that leaves behind the most lasting and distinctive cultural influence. From this vantage point, Hodgson analyzes the impact which the high culture of Islam, i.e., the culture of the *ʿulamāʾ*, left on world history and the masses who were at the core of Islamic civilization.

In chapter six, "In Search of a New Andalusia: Jacques Berque and the Arabs," Hourani discusses, albeit briefly, the life and thought of the French orientalist, Jacques Berque, who is the most sympathetic orientalist toward Arabs and Muslims. Berque is an example of a scholar who always attempted to comprehend Muslim culture and people from within. To Hourani, Berque's books present a serious treatment of Arab society and "contain not a series of abstract ideas strung alone a thin, straight line of exposition, but a continuous movement from the surface of society into the depth of ideas which move and explain it, and back again." (p. 131) Just like Gibb, "Berque spoke of [the] need to integrate in his work insights gained from the social sciences, observation of the movements of a violent reality, and the memories and imperatives of his personal life." (p. 133)

As has been indicated above, the modern interaction between the West and Islam is undoubtedly a very complex process. Hourani turns to discussing in a sensitive style a major manifestation of this interaction, which is often discussed but rarely understood: namely, how traditional and high Muslim culture responded to the challenge of the West. The tradition of high culture was "created around a core of religious [Muslim] doctrines and laws." (p. 99) And following Hamilton Gibb's analysis, Hourani argues that the literati class in Islam was keen at recording and transmitting a body of truth and knowledge, which was seen as a true representation of the inner spirit of Islam. This culture, protected by an unbroken chain of authority, had a major influence on the development of religion, culture, and ideas in Muslim societies. In other words, the *silṣila* of high culture lived on more or less uninterrupted by events until the end of the century. In the words of Hourani,

By the eighteenth century, there seems to have been achieved a certain stability in the ideal human type here described: that of the man learned in tradition and law, initiated into a Sufi order within the bounds of the *Shariʿah*, respectful of authority, willing to serve it but keeping his distance from it, giving leadership to the urban population, linked by interest with the preservation of a fabric of ordered and prosperous city life, and having a certain fear and disdain of the forces of the countryside. (p. 107)

This image of an 'ideal *ʿālim* started to change with the advent of European colonialism in Muslim lands, with the fast pace of political, social, and cultural changes borne by Muslim societies in this period leaving a lasting impact on, especially, the indigenous intelligentsia. Hourani says that, "We can notice in this period a deep disturbance in the lives of educated men, not only those trained in the new schools but those formed in the traditional ways of thought; not only do their careers take different paths, but the ways in which they see their own lives begin to change." (p. 109) The new forces at play exerted a major influence on the traditional milieu, and, in many ways, the *ʿulamāʾ* were the first ones to pave the way for a more progressive way of considering things. This is best represented, according to Hourani, in the lives of two great men coming from this background, Muḥammad Ba[y]ram, who came from a well-established traditional family in Tunisia, and Muḥammad Rashid Rida (d. 1936) of Lebanon (who later emigrated to Egypt and established the famous *al-Manār* periodical after becoming one of the chief disciples of the Egyptian reformist *ʿālim* Muḥammad ʿAbduh [d. 1905]). Both decided to choose new careers; both became journalists. Hourani comments on this situation by saying that in both cases, "there takes place a kind of mutation in the ideal type of the *ʿālim*." (p. 113) The deliberate choice of a new path and vocation is "a sign of a disturbance in [themselves] as well as in [their] world." (p. 112)

The last two chapters of the book discuss the way Arab authors in the nineteenth and early twentieth century responded to the intellectual and cultural challenge of the West. Hourani gives the example of Butrus al-Bustani, the editor of the first encyclopedia in modern Arab history, *Dāʾirat al-Maʿārif*, and the example of another Lebanese Christian, Sulayman al-Bustani, the translator of Homer's *Iliad*. These two literary and intellectual efforts are important because 1) they highlight the contributions of Arab Christians to modern Arabic thought and life; 2) they prove the ability of the Arabic language, though having a rich poetic and stylistic tradition, to absorb new forms of literary expressions, and 3) they demonstrate the need for the modern Arab intelligentsia to be open to the cultural tradition of the West, and to assimilate, as much as possible, Western intellectual achievements.

In sum, Albert Hourani's *Islam in European Thought* is a passionate, magnificent, and elegant piece of writing. It deserves to be read carefully and attentively.

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KURDISH ETHNONATIONALISM,

BY NADER ENTESSAR. BOULDER & LONDON: LYNNE RIENNER PUBLISHERS, 1992. VIII + 169 PAGES. NOTES TO P. 191, BIBLIOGRAPHY TO P. 207. \$32.50.

This is an engaging and timely book. Employing Kurdish nationalism as his case study, Nader Entessar presents the thesis that "ethnic conflict constitutes a major challenge to the contemporary nation-state in the Middle East." (p. vii) Using Western, Middle Eastern, and Kurdish sources, the author presents a systematic examination of the Kurdish national movements within Iran, Iraq and Turkey. Entessar explores how Kurdish national movements in the above mentioned countries have challenged the nation-state concept on domestic levels and through opportunities to forge alliances with regional and international actors.

Entessar's first chapter focuses on the elements of Kurdish identity, language, religion and "socioeconomic marginalization." He states that the latter has "contributed to the enduring quality of Kurdish ethnic consciousness." (p. 6) The issue of language is a problematic one for the author. He points out that the three Kurdish languages have been "mutually exclusive" and have "had an inhibiting impact on the development of a common Kurdish identity." (p. 5) Some Kurdish nationalists and scholars have disputed Entessar's claims and sources, suggesting that what he calls languages are actually dialects which are mutually intelligible albeit with a certain degree of difficulty.¹ According to Amir Hassanpour, Dimili speakers consider their language Kurdish dispute and "resent scholarly conclusions which indicate that their language is not Kurdish."²

Most of the book is devoted to discussing the conflict between the various Kurdish national movements and the states that they have been parceled into. Interestingly enough, in the first chapter, there is no clear set of theoretical assumptions that instruct the issue of Kurdish identity. Nor is there any attempt to suggest the direction in which Kurdish identity is following in light of the various contradictions he points to within the states with Kurdish minorities.

In a chapter on the Kurds in Iran, Entessar argues that the Kurds' earliest attempt to establish an independent state failed because of Ismail Ahga Simko's interest in plunder, his inability to overcome parochialism, and his failure to

¹ Amir Hassanpour, *Nationalism and Language in Kurdistan, 1918-1985* (San Francisco: Mellen Research University Press, 1992), 24.

² *Ibid.*

create a modern administrative organization. (p. 13) Here one could argue that Simko's primary identity was not with the Kurdish nation, that his motive was to enhance his power, and that nationalistic symbols were simply instrumental. A far more serious omission, the author does not point out that Reza Shah attempted to eradicate Kurdish identity and culture in a similar fashion as Ataturk had attempted in Turkey. As Hassanpour has illustrated, Reza Shah banned Kurdish "cultural traditions, dress, literature music and dance. A contemporary poet, Hemin . . . recalled that thousands of Kurds in schools and offices and even in the street were arrested, tortured and disgraced on charges of speaking Kurdish . . ." ³

This contradicts the benevolent image that Entessar presents of the Iranian state and its relationship with the Kurds as compared to Iraq and Turkey. This I would argue is done to support his contention that the Kurds in Iran, though not abandoning their Kurdish identity, are "culturally closer to other Iranian nationalities than to Kurds in Iraq or Turkey," (p. 160) and are less likely to secede. This is disputable given Richard Cottam's observation that as the shift in power took place from the tribal chiefs to the urbanized Kurds whose primary collective identity was Kurdish nationalism, that ". . . those who remained in Kurdistan chose Kurdish rather than Iranian nationalism" ⁴ and proclaimed their loyalty to the Mahabad Republic in 1946. The Komala's (Committee for the Resurrection of Kurdistan) formation and its restrictive membership are illustrative of the strong Kurdish identity community, their rejection of Iranian assimilation attempts, and of their distancing from the tribal leadership. Entessar accurately points out that the Komala's highly restrictive membership did not increase recruitment and prevented the USSR from developing closer ties with it due to its nationalist orientation. Only when the Komala accepted Qazi Muhammed, the respected authoritarian tribal chief, and the Kurds overcame tribal rivalries did the Soviets support the Mahabad Republic. (p. 18)

The strength of Entessar's analysis is evident in his discussion of the relationship of the Kurdish national movement with the Islamic Republic. Ayatollah Khomeini perceived the Kurds as part of the Muslim community (the Umma), and as such rejected their demands for autonomy. Khomeini's lieutenants, whose identity communities were both Islamic and Iranian, perceived Kurdish attempts under Ghassemlou's leadership (the leader of the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran [KDPI]), as a foreign-supported movement interested in harming "Islam and the Revolution and to serve . . . foreign powers whose interests are diametrically opposed to those of the Iranian people, including

³ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

⁴ Richard W. Cottam, *Nationalism in Iran*, rev. ed. (Pittsburg: The University of Pittsburg Press, 1979), 71.

the Kurds" (p. 34) Although the KDPI continually reaffirmed its support for the territorial integrity of Iran, it lost credibility once it sought assistance from Iraq after the First Gulf War. (p. 39) The Kurdish attempts to have an Iranian-Islamic central government acknowledge them as a distinct nationality is illustrative of the Kurdish quandary with Islamic movements whose primary identity is the Umma, whereas the Kurds primary identity is with their nationalism.

Entessar's analysis of the Kurds in Iraq is revealing in terms of his thesis and examination of the dynamics that the superpower competition had on regional actors and their ethnic community groups. However, Entessar has omitted discussion of Bakr Sidqi, a Kurd who attempted to integrate the Iraqi Kurds into modern Iraq after the 1936 coup. He attempted to develop a strong identification with the Iraqi state by recruiting young urban Kurds into the Iraqi Army because he perceived the army in Iraq as a vehicle for national integration.⁵ Sidqi's attempt was a serious challenge to the tribal leadership of the Kurds in Iraq. The failure of his attempt set the stage for conflict between the Iraqi state and its sectarian groups. Once Sidqi's attempt came to an end, the leadership of the Kurdish national movement became the sole domain of the tribal leadership as embodied by Mulla Mustafa Balzani until 1979. The Kurdish movement's success and failure rested in the hands of Mulla Barzani's ability to forge domestic, regional and international alliances to challenge Iraqi rule within the Kurdish region. From Entessar's thesis one could argue that the most significant development during the 1960s and 1970s was Mulla Barzani's rejection of the March Manifesto of 1972. The location of Kirkuk was the stumbling block to finalizing the accord. Balzani argued that he would "not bear, before the Kurds the responsibility for relinquishing Kirkuk." (p. 72)

Entessar deals with this highly significant period by dividing the discussion into two chapters. One chapter deals exclusively with the Kurds in Iraq as a domestic issue while the other chapter deals with the Kurds within the regional and international contexts of this period along with the First Gulf War. Given his stated thesis, the Iraqi case is the most significant because it crosses levels of analysis by illustrating how a "secessionist movement"—as he refers to the Kurds—developed an increased or even exaggerated sense of efficacy and capability and challenged the state they were parceled into as a result of their alliance with the US, Iran and Israel. The artificial separation of the domestic and international context undermines a fundamental proposition (which Entessar does not mention) that in order for ethnic groups to achieve independence or secession, international sponsorship is a must without which "secession" is unthinkable. Even Mulla Barzani after the 1975 defeat

⁵ Phebe Marr, *The Modern History of Iraq* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990), 74-75.

lamented that "... we would not have acted the way we did. Were it not for American promises, we would never have become trapped and involved to such an extent." (p. 76) Focusing on the domestic ethnic challenge to the nation-state system in the Middle East and separating it from its international context is not a sufficient framework for explaining the degree of success or failure of these movements, particularly if one compares the Iraqi case with the Kurds in Turkey. Moreover, the current Kurdish situation in northern Iraq and their ability to establish a provisional government outside the control of Baghdad is a function of the opportunities presented by the defeat of Iraq by the US and the end of the bipolar world order as well as the air protection zone provided by the Allied Forces in Turkey.

The history of the Kurds in Turkey best illustrates the lack of impact that the international system has had on the Kurdish situation and the Turkish state's official efforts to suppress Kurdish identity, though unsuccessfully. Entessar writes that since Atatürk's establishment of the modern Turkish state "[n]o country has been as preoccupied with the eradication of Kurdish national identity as Turkey" (p. 81) Entessar points out that this attempted eradication was in the form of laws such as Article 1, Law No. 1, 850, (p. 86) which encouraged vigilantism against the Kurds in order to pacify the Kurdish areas of Diyarbakir and the "large scale deportation of people from their ancestral villages" was laid out in Law No. 2510. (p. 106) The destruction of the Kurdish identity also involved erasing entire villages and the banning of the use of such terms as Kurd and Kurdistan. After Turkish politicians promised economic development to the "eastern provinces," during a political opening in 1971, the Kurds joined forces with the political parties of the left and the Kurdish question was discussed at the Fourth Congress of the Workers party of Turkey; (p. 89) however, autonomy for the Kurds was squarely omitted from the agenda. Nonetheless, this opening set the stage for the emergence of the Workers Party of Kurdistan (PKK). The return of the junta and the reinstatement of laws that further denied Kurdish identity and language, coupled with increased repression, not only radicalized the Kurdish movement but also generated more support and sympathy for it, and particularly for the PKK.

The case of the Kurds in Turkey supports Entessar's proposition that "discrimination has contributed to the enduring quality of Kurdish ethnic consciousness." (p. 6) Even though the Kurds maintained their identity, their sense of efficacy and capability to challenge the Turkish state has remained marginal due to the lack of outside support. Damascus has used the PKK to pressure Ankara over disputes about the Euphrates, but the territorial integrity of Turkey has never been challenged as has been the case with Iran and Iraq. The influx of Iraqi-Kurdish refugees into Turkey as a result of Halabja and the failure of the uprising at the end of the Second Gulf War has intensified the conflict in Turkey, illustrating the failure of the Ozal government to win the "hearts and

minds" of the Kurdish people who are increasingly being alienated from the Turkish state. On the other hand, the PKK has flourished and is organizing bases deep inside Turkey, (p. 100) to challenge the Turkish military's new tactic of forming "village guards" to suppress the PKK. With unemployment close to 50% (p. 107) in the Kurdish region and the success of the Iraqi Kurds, Kurdish identity will continue to challenge assimilation into the Turkish state.

The author discusses the legal and humanitarian principles applicable to Kurdish self-determination in the final chapter. He argues for pluralism and democracy as alternatives to assimilation, particularly in Turkey. Although that is a desirable avenue, it is apparent that it is not the goal of the Kurds in light of the strategy taken by the Iraqi Kurds to establish a provisional government in their region. Their attempt to secure international aid independently of Iraq and the lifting of the embargo on the Kurdish region are primary steps for self-determination and independence. The end of the Cold War has not only unleashed secessionist tendencies, but the success of the former Southern Soviet Republics and former Yugoslav Republics to secede provide the precedent for the Kurds to follow such a course of action.

Generally, this book presents the Kurdish issue in a well-integrated fashion by examining the Kurdish national movements within the various states that the Kurds were parceled into. It raises a number of challenging questions about minority rights and their right to secede in a complex and thoughtful manner. This book is recommended for those interested in the issue of Kurdish nationalism in light of the changes taking place in the region.

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**TAWHID AND SCIENCE: ESSAYS ON THE
HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY OF ISLAMIC SCIENCE,
BY OSMAN BAKAR (PENANG, MALAYSIA: SECRETARIAT
FOR ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY AND SCIENCE) 266PP.**

Osman Bakar's *Tawhid and Science*, a collection of essays about Islamic science, is finding a large audience in Malaysia, where Muslims are struggling to reconcile a traditional Islam with a modern and "developed" world, almost epitomized by the cold science and technology brought in by the developers. Conceiving of science originally—in the sense of being true to origins—is Bakar's contribution, and this book weaves a story of science which both chastises the abuses of science/technology and encourages its potential, harnessed through a framework of values, namely "*tawhid*," the declaration of God's unity.

Bakar is a well-known figure in Malaysia and beyond. He was trained in the heyday of Temple University's Religion Department, getting exposure to two major themes of non-Orientalist Islamic studies: a "fundamentalist" perspective which emphasizes the importance for Muslim communities of appropriating Western science/technology in order to achieve their proper position of dominance in the world, and a "sapiential" perspective which stresses contemplation of God's world rather than control and exploitation, inner struggles for knowledge attainment rather than outward allegiances. As Sachiko Murata has put it in her fascinating source book on gender in the sapiential tradition, the two types are, respectively, yang and yin. Bakar is an excellent example of the traditional scholar, who somehow balances the two primary forces of yin and yang in his own life and work. This is no small accomplishment given the current emphasis in Islamic discourse in Malaysia on the yang, despite the traditional Malay appreciation of the yin aspect of Islam.

That Bakar has not completely worked out the dynamic tension of the yin-yang (to continue that metaphor) in this book is my major criticism. That this book goes a long way in finding such a balance is a major accomplishment.

Bakar begins his book by staking a position that all science done, traditionally, by peoples informed by and in the worldview of Islam (whether the individual is "Muslim" or not), is fundamentally similar. Its similarity derives from the source of scientific endeavor in a unifying framework of *tawhid*. We have a metaphor of looking at the world through rosy glasses; for Osman, traditional Muslims looked at the world from hearts disposed to see God's unity in all they surveyed. With "enlightenment," the scientific endeavor shifted from the source of investigation to the object of investigation. That is

why "anything goes" in contemporary science, and this is also how *tawhidic* science closed the door to many areas of science/technology. It is inconceivable that certain kinds of scientific experimentation could ever be done under a *tawhidic* framework. Just where the "inconceivable" begins for contemporary Muslim scientists is a sure sign of the depth of their *tawhidic* perspective and their own conception of yin and yang.

Bakar's first chapter neatly disposes of the myth that Muslim science was somehow illogical and irrational. He examines the development of logic and the use of the experimental method, and then compares the metaphor of God the "clock-maker" with a *tawhidic* metaphor, showing how the "spirit of Muslim observation and experimentation is shaped by this religious consciousness." (p. 7)

He gets into something of a jam when he extends this helpful debunking into the clarion call of Western science for "objectivity." The reasoning goes that since "objectivity" is "good," it must be Islamic. He calls the primary meaning of "objectivity" the idea of impartiality and a disinterested perspective. While I think I know what he means, his words contradict the fact that *tawhidic* science is "interested." Of course Western science is "interested" too, but its values are usually submerged; Islamic science puts its values "up front," as Ziauddin Sardar says it, and Bakar seems to have missed this.

In his next chapter, Bakar skims over the importance of Seyyed Hossein Nasr's works, an important teacher in Osman's education. Although the perennialist or sapiential tradition does not desire approval from modernity, Bakar does find a way to interject into contemporary Western academic science the concept and worldview of tradition. He finds a chink in the armor of academic science in the "demolishment" of the idea of a single methodology in Science by scholars such as Feyerabend and Capra (two scholars he quotes). Western academic science should listen, therefore, to opposing worldviews. Muslim scholars would do well, too, in studying these "post-rational" scholars.

Bakar is part of a group, which met last November in Lansing, of Muslim scientists and social scientists who are—among many things—discussing issues of fundamental importance to Islamic civilization in ways which are accessible to a non-Muslim academic audience. Bakar is aware that this is something of a trojan horse, because "Were modern science to . . . accord [sacred Scriptures] the same epistemological status as given by the traditional sciences . . . it would cease to be modern science as it is presently understood and cultivated."

The rest of this chapter explores, through diagrams, the hierarchical worldview of the mystical and sapiential tradition. Although Ziauddin Sardar has attacked what he sees as a political hierarchy—and even an Isma'ili political hierarchy—in the formulations of scholars like Nasr and Bakar, from this chapter it is clear that what is being ranked and graded are sources and recep-

tacles of knowledge. Although the hierarchy which places intuition, say, above the senses as a source of knowledge can clearly be abused politically (by postulating an elite who are "in tune" and thereby legitimate masters of a sensory-slave population), the hierarchy itself is not the source of such abuse.

Chapter Three is a delightful journey with al-Ghazali through the various possible epistemologies available to humankind. Imam al-Ghazali is still very popular in Malaysia (many Malays name their sons after him) and Bakar handles al-Ghazali's journey beyond doubt in a way which balances the inward world and the outward, the sure and certain faith which comes about with the cleansing of the inner eye with the validity and importance of outward observance of the Law.

Chapter Four looks at Nature as a source of scientific knowledge. The traditional Muslim saw nature as God's creation, thereby sanctifying it. The *tawhidic* perspective, which knows nature through God and God through nature, will go a long way in abolishing the spirit of reductionism which "has come to characterize modern science" and which "has impoverished the natural order" (p. 76).

Chapter Five examines Ash'arite atomism. Ironically, some Muslim scholars of the last few decades have wanted to revive the Mu'tazilite perspective, which comes close to a "clock-maker" view of the world, so as to put Islam into the verifying grid of Western science. And then Western science came up with quantum mechanics, which sounds much more like Ash'arite atomism, making "forward" looking Muslims scramble to place "Islam" once again at the forefront of that verifying grid of the West. But Bakar, having "stayed the course," is now at the forefront!

The Ash'arite idea that God does not have "natural" laws which do His work, but directly "intervenes" into the "natural" world every instant, is more in tune, I suppose, with a quantum mechanical world where particles are defined by probability waves and go this way or that depending on observation and "chance." (Sufi scholars like Ibn 'Arabi [1165-1240] developed these ideas far beyond both Ash'ari's school and modern reductionist descriptions of quantum reality, delving into the Qur'anic idea of God being "*Each day... upon some task*" [55:29] and the sufi saying "*Divine self-disclosure does not repeat.*"¹)

Bakar's chapter on Islamic medicine is a carefully constructed introduction to an entire worldview, with diagrams showing the way the body is conceived of by Islamic medicine. Although he cites specifically Indo-Pakistan for a vital and living tradition of holistic medicine, and the fusion of Ayurvedic

¹ See William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989) pp. 18, 28, 103, 229, 274, and 336 for Ibn 'Arabi's treatment of "*Divine self-disclosure does not repeat*" and pp. 18, 38, 96, 98ff., 104, 107, 109, 183, 297, 338, and 377 for "*Each day he is upon some task*" (55:27).

knowledge with Islamic conceptions of health and the body, he does not mention a similar fusion closer to his home: in Malaysia, holistic Indian, Chinese, and Malay conceptions of health abound. While there are huge icons of intrusive and invasive modern Western medical science in Kuala Lumpur—Subang Medical Center, for example—there is also a growing attraction to traditional conceptions of health, found in a clinic run by the sufi-fundamentalist group Darul Islam, for instance.

Other chapters, like the one on 'Umar Khayyam, are well-researched monographs on a particular issue. It is only when Bakar resumes his generalizations that I have some criticisms. In the chapter on bioethics, for example, Bakar brings out the traditional discussion of abortion. But I feel that the author has missed the political dimension of this argument. Abortion has indeed been allowed in Muslim societies; the debate now, in the West, centers around the woman's body, and who may legitimately control it—the woman herself or the state. One could quite easily find a cynical political reason for abortions being legitimate in Muslim societies: the man wants to control "his" fetus! Because of strict inheritance laws, a man might wish to have a certain wife not conceive their child. Allowing abortion, from this perspective, is allowing men to "own" the fetus and decide, without the woman's involvement, whether it will become a child or not. Also, Bakar sees the role of Islamic jurisprudence in these issues, such as abortion and organ transplants, as one of giving answers. I disagree strongly. I believe the role of the *fiqh* (legal discourse) in Islam is instead to provide the terminology and framework for discussing issues; its role is to provide not answers but "a context for the peaceable formation by individuals of their own ties under an institutional umbrella," as Lawrence Rosen remarked in his insightful work on the *qadi* in a traditional Moroccan village.² The *fiqh* is meant to bring questions into the public arena, place concerns into different categories, and subject the whole to the community's understanding of the revelation. It is not meant to give answers *ex cathedra*.

Bakar's discussion of "Islamization" is excellent, and one hopes that this important movement gets more attention from the general academic community. Let me briefly put Bakar's work into the hotly contented field of "Islamization." Perhaps the oldest school of thought, separate from the Muslim "reformers"—those who, succumbing to the power and allure of modern colonial forces, sought to save Islam by making it modern—is best represented by Seyyed Hossein Nasr. This school of thought, which can be called perennialist,³ insists on the primacy of sacred tradition, where science is the

² Lawrence Rosen (1989) *The anthropology of justice: law as culture in Islamic society* (Cambridge: Press Syndicate) 60.

³ Perennialists include Ananda Coomaraswamy, Rene Guenon, Frithjof Schuon, Marco Pallis, Huston Smith, and Gai Eaton.

study of divine revelation and the divine order of things. This school of thought was, according to Ziauddin Sardar, the first to "convey the feel of an alternative science in action: a science that is just as 'objective' and 'rational' as Western science, but [which] draws its legitimacy and its philosophical and sociological framework from the all-encompassing epistemology of Islam."⁴

Interestingly, there is a similar epistemological stance which has developed independently of the above school. Naquib al-Attas, who now directs his own institute in Kuala Lumpur, has founded a school of thought which incorporates the mysticism and spiritualism—which is a hallmark of Nasr's work—without much emphasis on cosmologies and occult sciences. Naquib al-Attas's earliest contribution was to examine how the Malay archipelago became "Islamized." The concept of "Islamization" would later move in two different directions. From al-Attas' side, "Islamization" is very much imbued with spirituality and an epistemological separation from Western materialist concerns. Ziauddin explains that the

essence of al-Attas's argument is this: working within the Occidental system of knowledge, Muslim scholars and scientists can only promote the values and inner tensions of Western culture and civilization. Such a body of scholarship and science cannot really serve the needs of Muslim societies or indeed take social root within the Muslim world.⁵

From the other side, Ismail Raji al-Faruqi founded an "Islamization of Knowledge" school which sought to lay the groundwork for a thorough revision and recasting of the Western sciences to fit and benefit Muslim societies.⁶ Bakar has been able to integrate in his own work some of these divergent strands of Islamization.

But while many architects of Islamization are abstract, Bakar has presented the first "implementable" vision of the contemporary sapiential tradi-

⁴ Ziauddin Sardar (1985) *Islamic Futures. The Shape of Ideas to Come* (London: Mansell) 174. His criticisms of Nasr, understated and implied in *Islamic Futures*, are full-blown in *Explorations in Islamic Science* (Mansell), with explicit criticism of Bakar's work as well.

⁵ Ziauddin Sardar (1985) 94.

⁶ Let me re-map the above playing field in terms of size and influence. Nasr, working out of Beirut, Teheran, Temple University and now The George Washington University, has students throughout the world. His ideas are widely read throughout the Muslim world and he has been at the forefront of introducing Islamic science to the Western world. Al-Attas, in Kuala Lumpur, has a similar worldwide reputation, and his students are also spreading out throughout the world. Ziauddin Sardar, in London, has organized a group of thinkers under the concept of the *Ijmal*, a word connoting synthesis and beauty. The Ijmalis have produced an impressive body of literature in the decade or so of their existence, and they have had important, if sporadic, effect on governmental decision-making in the field of science. The Islamization of Knowledge movement has an even more extensive body of literature, mainly in economics, and has founded think-tanks and universities. By concentrating on textbooks and by encouraging graduate students, the Islamization movement hopes to have significant influence on this generation of Muslim scholars. Ziauddin in *Explorations* also discusses smaller groups, like the Aligarh school and those positivist Muslims who advocate a science with explicitly Western values which they insist is just "Science."

tion. Two universities in Malaysia, at least, to my knowledge, are currently implementing the syllabus created by him.

Although the syllabus seems at first quite different and as offering a strong alternative to Western science, the framework of the syllabus is neither novel nor original (in the sense of being true to origins). There are six "aims and objectives" (the headings are standard and required by the Ministry of Education). The first is

"To produce scientists, engineers and technologists who are not only professionally qualified and competent but are also spiritually, intellectually, and morally and ethically sound human persons on the basis on an integral and harmonious relationship with their Creator, fellow human beings and with the natural environment."

The problem I see is in the conception of science as something done by, among others, "engineers." This is not a neutral concept. The moment one introduces a hierarchy of this sort, one has the leaders and the led, the managers and the managed, the "doers" and the "done-to-ers." This elitist view is found later in the proposal, too, where the scientists and so on are supposed to "anticipate the religious, ethical, and social implications of some of their scientific discoveries and technological innovations." That this elitist view is not the only way to go should have been obvious. The clearest living example of an alternative, another way of living, politically and epistemologically, without destructive and exploitative hierarchies, is shown by "native peoples." There, we see entire ways of living which, I have become convinced, most closely parallel traditional Islamic societies, where sanctified Nature means that the entire society is learning from the earth, and the entire society is grounded in that sacred reality: engineers mining the earth, exploiting natural resources, managing forests, and so on are inconceivable to such a society.

One other indication that the syllabus is, contrary to the sapiential tradition, loaded with "yang" is the conception of vicegerency, a conception which takes puny man and makes him Man the Deputy of God. In the traditional commentaries of the Qur'an, from Ibn Kathir to al-Zamakhshari, the vicegerent is Adam, not every man. Viceregency is "earned" only by the most pliable [to God], most slavish [to God], most dependent [on God] human being—who is the human being least likely to want power and domination in this world! But among fundamentalists, it is axiomatic that Muslims can and should dominate the world.

Although the sapiential tradition is well-served by this accessible and insightful book, the appendix is disturbing. Is there no place for the sapiential tradition described so lovingly in the book in a contemporary university syllabus? Cannot Malaysia, with its long tradition of mystical and sapiential development, with its long and deep traditions of inter-religious harmony

and development, implement a science which is not the identical twin of destructive, exploitative, and imperialistic Western science? Is it impossible to balance the "masculinity run amuck" (Sachiko Murata's words)? Or must we, as Bakar seemed to imply, scrap Western science—even, or especially, in the guise of fundamentalist Muslim science—and return to a holistic and sane science, balancing yin and yang, appreciating native knowledge (the Penans and other native tribes are being systematically eliminated by the Malaysian government), and balancing gender? There are groups attempting just that—in Malaysia there is the Sahabat Alam Malaysia, the Friends of the Earth, and in the U.S. there is Earth First!, the Elmwood Institute, the Land Institute, Seventh Generation, Worldwatch Institute, the Iroquois Nation. I hope that Bakar can begin to tie his immense knowledge of the sapiential tradition into more politically oriented areas.

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ERIC WINKEL



BOOK REVIEWS

The Mystical Teachings of al-Shādhilī: Including His Life Prayers, Letters, and Followers. A Translation from the Arabic of Ibn al-Sabbagh's *Durrat al-Asrar wa Tuhfat al-Abrar* by Elmer H. Douglas. Edited with an Introduction and a Bibliography by Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi'. [SUNY Series in Islam.] Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993. xiv plus 274 pp. Index. n.p.

Some of the literature of the great Sufi order, Shādhiliyya, has been translated into Western languages during the latter half of the twentieth century. Victor Danner, Paul Nwyia and John Renard are scholar-translators whose names figure in this effort. The book under review here is a distinguished contribution to scholarship in the field. All research on the Shādhiliyya harks back to a few early collections of writings about the founder of the order, Abū al-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī (d. 656/1258). One of these works, dating from about sixty to seventy-five years after al-Shādhilī's death, was written and compiled by an obscure North African adherent of the order, Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh. Elmer H. Douglas (d. 1990), who translated Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh's book, lived for many years in North Africa, the area in which al-Shādhilī received his initial training and began his public career. From his place of residence in Tunis Douglas could see the historic Zallaj Cemetery whose promontory is crowned by the *zāwiya* of Sidi Abū al-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī, where modern members of the order go for their religious activities. After years of close contact with the people among whom al-Shādhilī's memory and influence abide to the present, Douglas moved on to the post of Professor of Islamic studies at Hartford Seminary where he also served as editor of *The Muslim World* for several years. All the time his translation of *Durrat al-Asrar* was maturing until he finally completed the manuscript, along with extensive explanatory notes, in 1970. Shortly before his death in 1990, SUNY Press offered to publish it. Professor Abu-Rabi' of Hartford Seminary saw it through the process, contributing an Introduction and a Bibliography.

Chapter One of the book is biographical, tracing the life of al-Shādhilī from his birth in Morocco to his quest for spiritual truth in Tunis, then farther east, and finally back in Morocco at the feet of a venerable mystic master. In Tunis once again he began the public phase of his career as a teacher of the Sufi way. After conflicts with the authorities in Tunis he migrated to Alexandria, Egypt.

Chapter Two presents some letters that al-Shādhilī wrote to his friends and associates

Chapter Three contains prayers and recitations attributed to the Sufi leader.

Chapter Four, by far the longest section, includes a selection of his sayings and thoughts on various subjects.

Chapter Five gives a brief notice of al-Shādhilī's death, together with anecdotes and testimonies from a number of his followers.

The text, presented in a simple and straightforward way, constitutes a fairly comprehensive manual of the popular Sufism that has exercised such a wide appeal, especially in North Africa and in other parts of the Arab world. In his notes, the translator carefully explains the technical vocabulary used by the Shādhiliyya in common with other mystics of Islam. Even though the biographical parts of the book are enveloped with a hagiographic veil, readers will perceive therein an image of the practical-minded, energetic and utterly devoted man that was al-Shādhilī. His many words of spiritual counsel reveal the religious psychology and the ethical content of his teaching. The prayers and litanies breathe powerful emotion. They include the famous "Litany of Light", "Litany of the Sea", and "Noble Litany". Numerous geographical references and a few tantalizing allusions to contemporary historical events help to situate the text in its concrete human setting. In the occasional mention of Jews and Christians one notes that from the Muslim side it was expected that the demonstration of religious power through signs and wonders would attract those of other religions to conversion.

The publishers are to be congratulated for a strikingly beautiful cover design, but, unfortunately, a number of typographical errors detract from the appearance of the book's text.

Newington, Connecticut

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Nizām Ad-Dīn Awliyā: Morals of the Heart. Translated and Annotated by Bruce B. Lawrence. (The Classics of Western Spirituality). Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1992. x plus 404 pp. Preface. Two introductions. Two indices. n. p.

Nizām ad-Dīn Awliyā (636/1238 to 725/1325) is widely regarded as the most influential Sufi figure in all of India in the 14th century. He was the principal successor of the famous Chishtī master, Farīd ad-Dīn Ganj-i Shakar (d. 664/1265) and directly influenced a long line of illustrious Sufi masters. If we are to believe the author of the *Tārīkh-i Firūz Shāhī*, Dīyā ad-Dīn Baranī (who belonged to Nizām ad-Dīn's circle of disciples), Nizām ad-Dīn Awliyā is largely responsible for drawing the inhabitants of Delhi towards a life of piety and virtue. Baranī also credits him with popularizing Sufi classics such as Makkī's *Qūt al-qulūb*, Qushayrī's *Risāla*, Suhrawardī's *ʿAwāriḥ al-maʿārif*, Hujwīrī's *Kashf al-majūb*, and the *Kitāb at-taʿarruf li-madhhab ahl at-tasawwuf* of Kalābādhī.

The major source on Nizām ad-Dīn Awliyā's thought and teachings is the *Fawā'id al-fu'ād*, a record of 188 meetings with him over a period of fifteen years (3 Shābān 707/28 Jan. 1308 to 19 Shābān 722/2 Sept. 1322) compiled by the poet Amīr Najm ad-Dīn Ḥasan Sijzī (652/1254-55 to ca. 738/1337). After he had been taking notes surreptitiously for a year, Sijzī informed his master of his project. From that point on Nizām ad-Dīn edited the content of the *Fawā'id al-fu'ād*. The book contains many anecdotes relevant to Nizām ad-Dīn's life, as well as his answers to diverse questions concerning mysticism, religion, law, and social conduct. Many of these are illustrated with reference to and quotations from earlier Sufi figures. As such, the *Fawā'id al-fu'ād* provides invaluable information on the Indian form of saint-centered Sufism as exemplified by the Chishtī Sufi order.

Until this time the *Fawā'id* has been available mainly in inaccurate lithographs and Urdu translations of varying quality. The only reliable edition is by Muḥammad Latīf Malik (Lahore: 1966). There is also a partial English translation by Z. Faruqi ('Fawā'id-ul-Fu'ad of Khwajah Hasan Dehlawi, *Islam and the Modern Age* 11 (1980): 166-91; 12 (1981): 63-73; 13 (1982): 33-44, 126-41, 169-80; 210-28; 14 (1983): 195-213; 15 (1984): 25-36, 167-92; 16 (1985): 231-42).

In light of the importance of the work and its relative inaccessibility, a popular English translation such as this one by Bruce Lawrence is indeed a welcome contribution to the study of religion in South Asia.

The work under review is a collaborative effort: the preface is by Simon Digby; there is a lengthy introduction by Khaliq Ahmad Nizami; the prose translation of the *Fawā'id al-fu'ād* is by Bruce Lawrence, and the poetry is translated through a collaborative effort of Bruce Lawrence and Christopher Shackle.

Nizami's introduction presents a brief biography of Nizām ad-Dīn's life, stressing his importance and that of the *Fawā'id* to the development of Islamic mystical thought and institutions in the Indian environment. The biographical material presented here is drawn almost entirely from hagiographical sources, supplemented with anecdotes from the *Fawā'id al-fu'ād*. The principal sources utilized by Nizami are the *Siyar al-awliyā* of Amīr Khurd, a close disciple of Nizām ad-Dīn and probably a relative, and the *Khayr al-majālis*, conversations of Nizām ad-Dīn's principal successor, Naṣīr ad-Dīn Chirāgh-i Dihlī (d. 757/1356), compiled by Ḥamīd Qalandar. Further information (on Nizām ad-Dīn's physical appearance no less) is drawn from the *Jawāmiʿ al-kalīm*, conversations of Sayyid Muḥammad Gīsū Darāz (d. 825/1422), compiled by his son Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusaynī. Gīsū Darāz's information supplements the facts provided in *Fawā'id al-fu'ād*, and it is also of value in assessing the impact of *Fawā'id al-fu'ād* on the religious attitudes of late

generations." (p. 48) There is no discussion of where Gīṣū Darāz found his information, considering the fact that much of it is not found in earlier Chishtī works which pay a great deal of attention to the teachings of Nizām ad-Dīn Awliyā.

Although the introduction brings together much material on Nizām ad-Dīn, it is presented essentially as a hagiography. There is no critical commentary or apparatus discussing the biographical material, and Nizami works on the debatable assumption that anything written about Nizām ad-Dīn which had been seen by him must necessarily be true. It is not uncommon for Sufi shaykhs and their disciples to be keenly aware of the importance of their own lives, and to reconstruct them as an exemplary personal history.

The translation of the *Ḥawāṣṣ al-Fuṣṣal* is preceded by a translator's introduction which contains an interesting discussion of the nature of mystical experience and the narrative process. There is also a lengthy exposition on the problems associated with translating Indo-Persian poetry, a discussion which seems somewhat out of place considering there are approximately 220 lines of verse in a text 270 pages long.

The translation is primarily based on the edition of Muḥammad Laṭīf Malik (Lahore: 1966), collated with the Newal Kishore (Lucknow: 1908) and Mujtabi (Delhi: 1916) editions. The translation is of high quality. In keeping with the spirit of the series, it is primarily intended for the non-specialist and keeps notes and transliterated terminology to a minimum. The text is very readable and admirably conveys the tone of Amir Hasan Sijzi's Persian prose and poetry.

The notes contain useful references to other English language works on Sufism. Most of these are well-known secondary sources and are of little use to the specialist. Lawrence occasionally provides interesting annotations in the endnotes, although some of these are quite debatable: he overstates the degree of crystallization of formal Sufi orders in India in the 7th/13th century in discussing whether individuals were Suhrawardī or Chishtī. His quotation of a statement by Annemarie Schimmel: "No thinker of medieval Islam has attracted the interest of Western scholars more than Ghazzālī" (p. 379, note 60) has little bearing on his apparent amazement at how little interest Ghazzālī holds for Nizām ad-Dīn Awliyā and Ḥasan Sijzi. Ghazzālī appears to have exerted very little influence on 13th century Sufi scholarship even in Iraq and Iran. Individuals such as Junayd al-Baghdādī, Shihāb ad-Dīn as-Suhrawardī, and Najm ad-Dīn al-Kubrā cannot and have not been considered "lesser" masters of the Path," as Lawrence apparently believes they are.

The major flaw in the volume under review is the number of errors and inconsistencies in transliteration. They are too numerous to list here in complete detail, so a few examples must suffice: *majlis-e sama* instead of *majlis-e sama* (p. 74); *samāc* instead of *sama* (p. 75), *maṣsum* instead of *maṣūm* (p. 381, note 6) Shaykh Luḡman Sarkhaṣī (p. 89) should be Sarakhsī, after the town of Sarakhs in Khurasan. *Ḥarj wa'l-marj* (p. 185) should be *ḥarj wa'l-marj*, and *Shahī raushan-i samir*, translated as "the Sovereign of Inner Light" (p. 275) should be *shah-i raushan-i samir* (and I would be more inclined to translate it as "the Inner Lord of Light" or "Luminous Lord of the Heart").

The transliteration is inconsistent and confusing, and the choice of whether to make transliterated words reflect Arabic, Irano-Persian or Indo-Persian pronunciation seems arbitrary: *Sultan Ghiyas ad-Dīn* (p. 195), but *Ghiyathpur* (pp. 20ff), although the *tha* is never pronounced in Persian, nor the *pa* in Arabic. The Persian spelling *qaz* is used, but *dhikr* is chosen over the far more common (even in Arabic) *zikr*. The *lam* of the Arabic definite article is sometimes changed for ease of pronunciation (e.g. *Nizām ad-Dīn*) but not at others (e.g. *Layal al-Ragha'ib* [p. 105]). The second noun in an *iḥāṣā* construction is capitalized inconsistently: *Shams al-'arīfin* but *'Ain al-Qusat* (p. 96). Ghazzālī's magnum opus is transliterated as *Ihya' Ulum ad-Dīn* (p. 167) and *Ihya' Ulum ad-dīn* (p. 174). Abu Sa'īd ibn Abī'l-Khayr's (d. 440/1048) name appears as *Khwaja Abu Sa'īd Abū'l-Khayr* (p. 86 and index), *Abū'l Sa'īd Abū'l-Khayr* (p. 119), and *Abu Sa'īd ibn Abī'l-Khayr*. (p. 236) The diphthong is written both as in *Abū'l-Khayr* and in *Shaykh Uthman Khaurabadi* (p. 115) and *Khwaja Khair Nassaji* (pp. 301-2) The translator's introduction presents its own set of problems with an even greater degree of inconsistency in the transliteration of Persian poetry.

These criticisms are of little importance to someone unfamiliar with the original language of the text. Despite the problems mentioned above, the volume under review will provide welcome information on Nizām ad-Dīn Awliyā and South Asian Sufism to scholars who do not have access to the Persian edition or Urdu translation of Muḥammad Laṭīf Malik. It will also provide a very readable

translation of an important Sufi text to individuals outside the field. A critical study of the life and thought of Nizām ad-Dīn Awliyā is still a much-needed book waiting to be written.

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Traditional Islam in the Modern World. By Seyyed Hossein Nasr. London and New York: Kegan Paul International, 1987, 1990. x plus 335 pp. Notes, Index. \$19.95 (p).

The contrast between traditional Islam and its revivalist or fundamentalist manifestations is the task set by Nasr in this important contribution. The analysis offers a breadth of fresh air in an increasingly pedantic literature that attempts to clarify but muddles. Islam is not a cliché and some negative manifestations do not lessen its spiritual values. While much has been written about revivalist movements—much of it in sensationalist terms—little has been done to expand on Islam's rich legacy. Nasr fills this void by providing thorough discussions of the meaning of *jihad* (no, it is not made of mad bombers), the Muslim work ethics (yes, there is one), relations between male and female (especially its egalitarian spiritualism), and Shi'ism (no, it is not locked in competition with Sunnism).

Nasr's discussion of the tensions between traditional Islam—which he defines as the quest to preserving the revelation's truth—with Western modernism, is superb. He provides examples in education, philosophy, architecture and city planning to assess the impact that Western modernization has had on Islam as religion and on the Muslim community's socio-cultural life. Indeed, he observes how Western city planning, for example, robbed Muslims of their innate harmony since the environment was as important for the faithful as his inner peace. Harmony between the spiritual and temporal worlds, argues Nasr, is a worthy goal for the believer who struggles to achieve what is possible during his life while preparing himself for eternity.

This highly recommended study closes with a unique appreciation for the contribution that Louis Massignon, Henry Corbin and Titus Burckhardt have made to the study of traditional Islam. Nasr recognizes the immense contributions these men have made to understanding the intricacies of traditional Islam. His tribute to their work is precisely in expanding of their findings and interpretations. Indeed, by tackling some of the thorny questions that face Muslims in modern times, Nasr has earned a place among his peers.

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Islam: An Introduction. By Annemarie Schimmel. Albany: State University of New York, 1992. vii plus 166 pp. n.p.

Since the emergence of Iranian revolution in 1979, many Western scholars have developed an interest in learning and writing about Islam and the cause of Islamic resurgence. However, only few works represent an Islamic view, and Schimmel's *Islam: An Introduction* is one of them.

Schimmel portrays Islam from the standpoint of traditional Muslims and leaves the reader to make his/her own judgment of Islamic history. She furnishes the reader with a panorama of events and shows how Western scholars from the 16th to 19th centuries presented Islam to the public.

Schimmel artfully tackles the history of Islamic expansion from the time of the Prophet Muḥammad until today. Her narratives are silent about the causes of Muslims' victories and the.

downfall in some regions. She merely reports the history without any attempt to criticize it in order to fulfill her promise of "portraying Islam in its traditional manner."

A large portion of the book covers discussions about the nature of the Islamic revelation—the Qurʾān which serves as an interpretation to the word of Allah. One wonders why Schimmel prefers to use the word "Koran" instead of the correct transliteration "Qurʾān." She points out that despite the fact that non-Muslims and some Muslim scholars doubt the authenticity of the *Hadith*, Muslims accord their Prophet a great respect. They try to emulate Muḥammad in all aspects of life. Whether all *Hadith* of the Prophet should be accepted as authoritative or not, Islam cannot be practiced perfectly without recognizing Muḥammad as the best interpreter of the Qurʾān.

The last portion of the book presents the theology and philosophy of Islam, and how both had been borrowed, translated and reworked by Muslim scholars in the Middle-Ages. It was through the Muslims that the Greek, Roman and Persian sciences were translated into Arabic and later transferred to the West. Despite the fact that Schimmel's report on the Shīʿites is short, it is fascinating. She presents the Shīʿites' views on many issues, their ideas and ideals, the legacy of their Imams and a short account of major Shīʿite sects. She also pays close attention to the Ismāʿīli sect because of its contribution to its community, its engagement in politics and its emphasis on the education of women.

In my opinion, Schimmel contributes greatly to an excellent understanding of Islam in this work. She clarifies some points, which Muslim apologists cannot explain easily: the question of slavery, religious tolerance, and Jihād in Islam. She claims that "the entire history of Islam proves that slaves could occupy any office, and many former military slaves, usually recruited from among the central Asia, Turks, became military leaders and often even rulers as in Eastern Iran, India, and medieval Egypt (the Mamluks)." (p. 67) To Schimmel, Jihād should not be understood as a holy war, but as "a fight against aggressors and apostates" and a war against societal evils which may take many forms. (p. 70) She also points out that Islam is a tolerant religion which allows other religions and its members to exist, participate, contribute to and engage in any profession in an Islamic state.

At the end, the author discusses the issue of 'Muslim fundamentalists'. She maintains that 'Muslim fundamentalists' are hardly interested in the mystical and religious contents of the Qurʾān. (p. 142) "These fundamentalist reformers," she concludes, "are concerned with the legal and lawbound side of Islam." (p. 142) In my view, this is not the case. The Muslim Brothers, considered fundamentalists by some, take the spiritual side of the Qurʾān quite seriously.

To conclude, this is a good introduction to Islamic history in general. It merits the attention of those who seek to understand Islamic history and thought from a traditionalist perspective.

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Al-Damurdāshī's Chronicle of Egypt. 1685-1755: al-Durra al-musāna fī akhbār al-kināna.

Translated and annotated by Daniel Crecelius and ʿAbd al-Wahhāb Bakr. [Arab History and Civilization. Studies and Texts. Number 2.] Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1991 xi + 424 pp. Bibliography. Maps. Index. n.p.

Students of the Arab world during the Ottoman period, particularly the "middle centuries" from about 1600-1800, have long worked to bring to interested readers texts and translations which would serve to make those middle centuries better known and understood. The translation under review here, which is part of a handsome new series from E.J. Brill, attempts just that goal; and for the most part it succeeds admirably. It was once widely accepted that between the sixteenth century chronicles which described the Ottoman conquest of Egypt in 1517, and the masterpiece of ʿAbd al-Rahmān al-Jabartī, *Ajāʾib al-āthār fī al-tarājīm waʾl-akhbār*, which chronicled the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, there was very little, if any, Egyptian historical writing worth perusing. That gap, that lack, was in and of itself taken as evidence of cultural and civilizational

decline in Egypt during the Ottoman period. Today, no one seriously holds to that view. Not only have Egyptian scholars attempted within the past two decades to treat the Ottoman period in a series of fine monographs (cited in Crecelius's and Bakr's bibliography); but also there have been parallel efforts to publish edited versions of chronicles which long lay dormant in manuscript libraries (here, the work of 'Abd al-Rahīm 'Abd al-Rahmān is most prominent). As a result, the picture of Ottoman rule in Egypt has constantly undergone revision in recent years.

Damurdāshī's chronicle is primarily of interest because it is the product not of a member of the traditional cultural elite, the *ʿulamāʾ*, but rather of a member of the military establishment. And the contents of the chronicle reflect that origin. Because the military in Egypt dominated the country, controlled its resources, and successfully resisted generations of Ottoman governors, their world-view and their role in their country's history acquire considerable importance.

Damurdāshī's chronicle falls into two volumes, which the translators have respected in their arrangement of the text. The material follows the successive regimes of Ottoman governors, which indicates that although the governors themselves might not have always been effective in controlling the people and resources of Egypt, their periods of residence tended to define history in the minds of the ruling elite. The translators' substantial introduction of some twelve pages is of enormous help to the reader; and their voluminous notes, along with the maps, index, and bibliography, do much to make Damurdāshī's work sensible and accessible. The clarity of the author's prose, the rich detail, and the representation of the point of view of a member of the military elite, make this text a valuable addition to the literature of the Ottoman period in Egyptian history. Struggling to control resources and wealth, to keep the Ottoman authorities at some length, and to maintain local freedom of action, the Egyptian elites of this period present a dynamic history, a living tradition, which is well captured by Damurdāshī, one of their chroniclers. Although the annalistic form tends to avoid analysis and generalization, readers will be able to draw their own conclusions from this eighteenth-century text. It is important that readers have at hand the tone, the viewpoint, and the perspective of an author like Damurdāshī.

Some comments regarding the translation and presentation may well be in order. In spite of the clean, neat translation, and the many helps (bibliography, maps, and notes), some readers may stumble with the rendering of names and terms in Crecelius's and Bakr's work. In particular, this reviewer would mention the system of transliteration. Someone once said that criticizing a system of transliteration is the last refuge of a scoundrel; but it might equally be said to be the first refuge of an Orientalist! Crecelius and Bakr have adopted a rather eccentric system (described on their page xi); although it is consistently applied, it may give specialists in Ottoman history some difficulty. Because there is no single internationally-accepted standard, and because two languages, Arabic and Turkish, are involved, it is inevitable that renderings of names and technical terms will vary from those which some readers might be used to. However, as this reviewer likes to tell his students, every name or term in Middle Eastern studies can be rendered in at least two ways; and readers should be prepared for this fact of scholarly life. In spite of this rather minor limitation, the text presented in this fine new series from E.J. Brill will command attentive readers.

In conclusion: this translation of Damurdāshī, if anything, will stimulate general readers to rethink the Ottoman experience in Egypt and in other parts of the Ottoman state, to re-examine its main lines of development, and to ponder the lessons of the Ottoman legacy for those peoples who today struggle with the heritage of the past, whether they are in the Arab Middle East or in Bosnia and Southeast Europe. Specialists too will want to reexamine their own assumptions. Perhaps a hidden contribution of this translation is to challenge readers to think of the Ottoman experience as "normal," as subject to the same pressures and tensions which have faced people in other times and places. Such normalization is desperately needed in our world; and readers would do well to consider it.

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The Islamic Movement of Iraqi Shī'as. By Joyce N. Wiley. Boulder & London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1992. 193 pp. n.p.

This is the first book in English on the Shī'ī Islamic Movement in Iraq. In addition to the written materials, the author went as far as interviewing leaders and members in the Islamic Movement in that country. The significance of this work is that it comes at a time when a tremendous amount of literature is being written about Iraq, especially since the Gulf Crisis. Most of this literature deals with the political, military, and economic capabilities of Iraq, and only a few studies deal with religion and society.

Wiley starts her book by distinguishing the modern Iraqi Islamic Movement from that of the military campaign launched by the *ūlamā'* against the British in 1920. In this regard, she purports to clarify the historical relationship between the Shī'ī Islamic Movement in Iraq and the revolution in Iran. Distinguishing the Iraqi Movement from the Iranian Revolution, the author states that the Islamic Movement in Iraq began in the 1950s as a social and reformist movement, and argues that Islamic Iraqi activists are not "fundamentalist" if this word implies a rejection of modernism and change. Sayyid As-Sadr stressed the reformist character of the Movement, and under his leadership

Shī'ī clerics engaged in a broad undertaking of study, discussion, and writing aimed at reinterpreting religious law in light of scientific advances, the changing role of women, and government without Islamic legitimacy. (p. 107)

Against this reformist background, one could understand As-Sadr's movement and the influential but conservative Shī'ī [religious] aristocracy. The latter understood reformism as a deviation from Islam. (p. 37)

It was the tremendous and radical political changes within Iraqi society accompanied by secularization, that motivated As-Sadr to interpret the main tenets of the Usūlī School in a way to make traditional Shī'ī beliefs compatible with the demands of modern life (p. 31) As-Sadr became aware of two main issues facing the modern Muslim World: 1) the clergy had lost their monopolistic control over molding the world view of lay Muslims, and 2) there was a *de facto* separation between the modern practice of religion and the Islamic tradition. To remedy this situation, therefore, As-Sadr stressed the need to exercise *Ijtihād* (independent legal reasoning) on one level, and to adopt more assertive methods to reach modern educated laymen. Furthermore, he accepted some laymen in his classes at the seminary of Najaf, and encouraged discussing such issues as the Islamic position on women, religious minorities, and Western civilization. It was in October 1957 that As-Sadr and others established the Islamic Dā'wa Party. The study-circles of the members of al-Dā'wa was the first stage of the call to Islam. (p. 32) Later in 1961, another Shī'ī party was formed under the name of "The Islam Task Organization" (Munzamat al-'Amal al-Islāmī) in Karballah under the leadership of Muhammad Taqī Al-Mudarassi. This party was more revolutionary in character than As-Sadr's party. Al-'Amal mobilized the Shī'ī community in the pursuit of Islamic government. (p. 37) Al-Dā'wa and Al-'Amal expanded and developed throughout the period 1957-68, while remaining relatively unknown to the government.

Wiley points out correctly that when the Ba'athists seized power in 1968 "the Shī'ī *ūlamā'* found themselves confronted by a new government strategy, one far more inimical to their welfare than had been the secularization of the British and the leftist policies of Qassam." (p. 45) In my view, the Ba'athist take over posed a threat to the whole Islamic movement, Shī'ī and Sunni alike. For example, Abdulaziz Al-Badri, a Sunni cleric, was killed by the Ba'athists in 1969. Many other Sunni and Shī'ī activists were executed later on. In 1971, the Iraqi government started a series of expulsions of the Shī'īs claiming they were of Persian origin. By 1988 the official Iranian sources indicated that Iran had accepted 500,000 Iraqi refugees. (p. 113) On the other hand, the Ba'athists took control of the collection and distribution of Shī'ī religious funds. They started a large secret service organization. According to the author, twenty per cent of Iraqi government employees were employed in this organization. (p. 52)

Against this background, the Dā'wa party started to search for new solutions. As-Sadr reached the conclusion that "Islam need [ed] not reform but revolution" (p. 54) Thus, Iraqi Shī'ī *ūlamā'* "moved from reformist to confrontational strategies. Consequently, large scale uprisings took place,

one in February 1977, and another in June 1979. The latest came in the wake of the Gulf War; 70,000 more Shī'is fled to Iran.

This situation leads Wiley to discuss the political legitimacy of the Ba'athists. She argues that the legitimacy of the Ba'athist party is based neither on economic success nor popular sovereignty, (p. 109) or even on career qualifications. (p. 105) The Ba'ath leadership has resorted to Islamic themes recently as a way to reassert its authority in Iraqi society.

On another account, Wiley discusses the development of the Sunni-Shī'ī communities in Iraq and their relationship. The Arab Sunni community of Iraq, since Ottoman times, has had a privileged position. In other words, the Arab Sunnis elite maintained its community through association with various governments. (p. 25) The Shī'is, who were not represented equally as compared to the Sunnis, enjoyed religious freedom in their cities at the time of the Ottomans and felt more integrated in the modern Iraqi society under the Hashimite rule. (p. 14) Consequently, they were never threatened as a community, except under the Ba'athists after 1968. Thus, Shī'ī Islamists view their struggle as a justifiable fight against an infidel political system. (p. 148) But Wiley falls short in describing the level of frustration of Shī'ī Islamists for the lack of a strong opposition towards the government from the Arab Sunni Movement that could have helped them in delegitimizing the Ba'athi government in a worldwide Islamic Movement. This frustration reached its peak after the second Gulf War.

Wiley points to many incidents of cooperation between Sunni and Shī'ī Islamists (pp. 17, 41, 108, 125, 145) Yet, in all these incidents, a planned strategy for cooperation was lacking

in most Muslim countries, accommodation between Shī'is and Sunnis is not a critical political issue, but in Iraq there is little prospect of integrating the country on the basis of Islam unless the two sects do harmonize their programs and efforts. (p. 145)

In discussing As-Sadr's concept of the Islamic government, Wiley suggests that although he held the *ulama* responsible for exercising political leadership, he did not find them fit to govern by themselves. (p. 126) As-Sadr's position is different from that of Imam Khomeini as expressed in *wilayat al-faqih* (Governance of the jurist). The author contends that As-Sadr was idealistic in the belief that the Islamic government would "make a pleasant impact on the whole world," (p. 137) and that individual citizens would be satisfied with Islamic government. But, to my mind, Wiley falls in the same track of idealism when she says "damage to Islam as a religion could well be an unintended consequence of Islamic government." (p. 138) This position misinterprets the unique character of Islam as both a religion and a polity. It is true that Islam has been used by governments throughout history, yet this has not reduced its popular appeal.

In the final part of the book, the author deals with the future of the Shī'ī Islamic Movement within the context of the contemporary Iraqi opposition, which aims to rule a united post-Saddam Iraq. Wiley argues that the Islamic Movement will certainly opt for a political solution. But that does not mean that the Shī'is will go back to quietism. (p. 152) She assumes that the conscious effort by Muslims to get control of the government in Iraq derives from societal changes and governmental failures.

A main consequence of the Gulf Crisis has been the willingness of the Islamic Shī'ī Movement to share power with secular, even Marxist, Iraqis. This indicates that Wiley's point concerning the option of political solution is accurate, i.e. the Shī'ī Islamic Movement, which was forced to adopt slogans of Islamic government and *wilayat al-faqih* during the Iran-Iraq war, is now more realistic. This attitude coincides with the initial reformist position of the Da'wa party. As a conclusion Wiley reaches an impartial premise that the Islamists' programs can be made to work but they do have some pitfalls. (p. 139) This fact cannot be denied

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Iranian Politics and Religious Modernism: The Liberation Movement of Iran under the Shah and Khomeini. By H.E. Chehabi. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1990. 342 pp. Appendix. Glossary. Bibliography. Index. \$29.95.

The flight of Mohammad Reza Shah from Iran in January 1979 signified the inevitable victory of the Ayatollah Khomeini and his revolutionary, fundamentalist forces. An Islamic Republic now replaced the secularizing Pahlavi Dynasty. One of the main actors in the transition of power from the monarchists to the revolutionaries was the Liberation Movement of Iran. H.E. Chehabi's work is the first comprehensive study of that small but important political front.

The author begins with an examination of the ideological nature of religious modernism in Iran, focusing upon the country's dual society, which itself was a result of Iran's modernization. This societal polarization politicized both the modern and traditional classes. The modern segment of society consisted of not only supporters of the Pahlavi Dynasty but also leftists, nationalists, liberals, and regionalists. However, the traditional segment of society, which constituted the majority, continued to adhere to the old ways, specifically Shi'ism. Both groups, however, came to view the monarchy as illegitimate. Consequently, they explored avenues of opposition as Mohammad Reza Shah became more oppressive.

Regardless of the widening gap between these two segments of society, a binding force existed to unify their resistance to the Pahlavi Government—the clergy. From this vantage point, Chehabi explores religious modernism and the Liberation Movement of Iran. He clarifies the much confused difference between Islamic modernism and reformism, "Modernism is the province of people who are close to the religious establishment but outside it, and its motivating force comes from outside," while "Reformism is an attitude encountered more often among the members of the religious hierarchies, and is motivated by internal processes of the religion." (p. 27)

The most visible and recognized member of the LMI is Mehdi Bazargan, who became the first prime minister of the Islamic Republic after the overthrow of the Pahlavi Dynasty in 1979. Bazargan pushed for a moderate, pragmatic definition of Islam's contribution to politics in the contemporary world, exemplified by his support of religious modernism and leadership in the LMI. Bazargan and other members of the LMI wanted to offer the youth of Iran an alternative to the radical policies of the Tudeh Party. Ayatollah Taleqani stated that the greatest challenge confronting, "religion and people," after the abdication of Reza Shah in 1941, was "the rapid spread of Marxist and materialist principles and the founding of the Tudeh Party." (p. 118) Chehabi concludes that the clergy was "hopelessly out of touch with the political situation and the spirit of the times and contributed to the massive defection of Iran's youth from religion." (p. 118) Thus, religious modernism in Iran was a response to the perceived threats of communism, secularism, and Baha'ism and the stagnation of the present clergy.

The author explores these formative years and activities of the Liberation Front within the context of the National Front. He further traces the ideological foundation and leadership base of the movement. Both the reactive nature and maneuverability of the LMI under the Pahlavi Government and the Islamic Republic, along with the flexibility of its ideology, are clearly portrayed in the book. For example, during the 1950s and the 1960s the LMI defined itself as Mossaddeqist and Muslim, yet after the overthrow of the Imperial Government it redefined itself as Muslim, a supporter of the constitution of the newly-born Islamic Republic, and a champion of the eventual unity of the Moslem World. However, under both Mohammad Reza Shah and Ayatollah Khomeini, the LMI clashed with the government over the correct place of Shi'ism in the political and social kaleidoscope of the state. Like many moderate forces the LMI faced opposition and criticism from the religious and secular movements in the country.

Chehabi dedicates the rest of his book to the activities of the LMI in the two decades before the overthrow of the monarchy in 1979, focusing upon the liberalization of the 1960s, the entrenchment of the Pahlavi Government from 1963-1977, the second liberalization of 1977-1978, and the subsequent revolution.

Chehabi presents an excellent summary of the contributions of such major figures as Ali Shariati and Ebrahim Yazdi. In addition, Chehabi meticulously explains why by 1977, "increasing numbers of Iranians had joined the ranks of the articulate, but leftists and fundamentalists had more appeal

than the old Nationalists, be they secular or religious." (p. 220) Thus, by 1978 the Islamic movement in Iran was polarized between the fundamentalists on the one hand, and the Mojahedin on the other. The LMI and Bazargan were somewhere in the middle.

After the flight of the Shah, Bazargan became prime minister of the Provisional Government and brought with him members of his party, the LMI. However, just as the Russian Provisional Government of 1917 under Alexander Kerensky would not succeed, the same would occur with Bazargan and his LMI government. In the last two chapters of the book Chehabi presents the workings of the LMI in the Provisional Government, documents their fall from grace, and the role they are presently playing as the "loyal opposition" in the Islamic Republic.

To conclude, Chehabi offers an excellent analysis of the evolution of Iran's Liberation Movement. In so doing, he also helps the reader to understand Ayatollah Khomeini's success in overthrowing the Shah and establishing an Islamic Republic. Chehabi blends personal interviews with a very rich range of political, academic, journalistic, and primary sources in a variety of languages.

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Iran's First Revolution: Shi'ism and the Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1906. By Mangol Bayat. New York, New York: Oxford University Press: 1991. 316 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. n.p.

Iran's Constitutional Revolution of 1905-06 is the focus of Mangol Bayat's new work, *Iran's First Revolution*. In her revisionist study she presents five conclusions which provide the basis for the book. Mainstream Shi'ism and the high *'ulamā'*, regardless of their visible role in the major events of the time, were in reality the least important agents of constitutional change in the country. (2) Shi'a radicalism, Western liberalism, and Russian Social Democracy formed the three revolutionary movements active in Iran's constitutional struggle. (3) Religious dissidents mobilized the masses and introduced modernist concepts and ideas into the political arena. However, they disguised their thoughts in traditional, religious language of the Qur'an. (4) The Muslim Social Democratic Party of Baku was successful in recruiting members from religious dissidents and the lower hierarchy of the *'ulamā'*. Furthermore, the Party established a chapter in Tabriz on the eve of the 1905-06 Revolution. (5) While the bazaaris, constitutionalist mojtaheds, and most of the elitist intelligentsia wanted reforms, the Iranian Social Democrats, along with their clerical allies, intended to radically transform the political and social structure of Qajar Iran. (p. 10)

Bayat discusses the *'ulamā'*'s role in the Constitutional Revolution, reaching back to the Tobacco Crisis of 1891-1892. "The most fundamental assumption, which was accepted without challenge by other writers, is the portrayal of the *'ulamā'* as leaders of the opposition to the state, as initiators of the popular revolts against the shah's policies in the 1800s through the 1900s, rising in defense of Islam and the nation against the tyrannical rule of the Qajars." (p. 6) The views of various prominent scholars, including Ann Lambton, Hamid Algar, and Nikkie Keddie, are presented on the role of the *'ulamā'* in Iran during the Qajar period, specifically during the last forty years of the dynasty's rule. This helps the reader unfamiliar with the scholarly discussion understand the multi-dimensional nature of this subject.

The conventional view that the *'ulamā'*'s role was central to the national struggle against the state and foreign intervention fails to consider the dating and tracing of the origins of the popular movements in the last twenty years of the nineteenth century, as European presence began to be felt. Consequently, the diagnosis of the social and political malaise of the time was misinterpreted as a symptomatic reaction to European imperialism. Bayat supports this assumption by stating that social strife and political disturbances occurred before the foreign loans debacle and the expansion of foreign trade in the country.

While a valid observation, the disintegration of the Qajar Government in the face of foreign exploitation coincided with its attempt to control the nation's economy (through higher taxes and levies) and politics (through centralization of the government). These movements propelled the *ulamā'*, for their own reasons and on behalf of the merchants, to clash with the autocratic Shah.

Bayat examines Iranian polity under the Qajars and evaluates *ulamā'*-state relations. In discussing the Tobacco Affair, the author disputes the claim by Keddie, Lambton, and Adamiyat that as a consequence of this event the *ulamā'*'s power and influence increased. (p. 24) However, she states, "The historical significance to the regime (Tobacco Crisis) lay in the deliberate and calculated use of clerical influence over the masses by interested parties on a national and international scale never before attempted." (p. 25)

The fact that the *ulamā'* held such power over the masses, and that the national and international parties courted the religious leadership in order to press their own intentions signifies a more powerful and influential *ulamā'* than Bayat allows. Yet, she contends that the end of the Tobacco Crisis, "marked a spectacular increase in the ulama's activities," and that, "the importance of the mosque as a center of propaganda and mass mobilization attracted the attention of two European powers, Russia and Britain." (p. 31) Bayat appears undecided about the exact role of the *ulamā'* in this period, and how to label it. The first chapter contains, however, an excellent analysis of the divisive conditions present in the religious establishment. The following two chapters explore the intelligentsia, merchants, and religious dissenters. Her examination of the Iranian polity is meticulously researched.

The chapter on the often-neglected Transcaucasian Connection is particularly insightful, utilizing Persian, Turkish, and Soviet sources. The National Liberation Movement in Russian Azerbaijan, the Azerbaijan Muslim Liberation Movement, and the Hemmatists are detailed along with their influence on Iranian politics at the turn of the century.

Bayat's book is a solid effort, encompassing excellent sources in a variety of languages. Her use of Soviet works is particularly impressive. This book provides a new and controversial vantage point from which to view Iran's first revolution. This detailed and sophisticated account, however, is more appropriate for the veteran scholar, not the novice to the field of Iranian history.

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Iran: A Decade of War and Revolution. By David Menashri. New York: Holmes and Meier, 1990. xvii + 410 pp. Cloth \$47.50. Paper \$24.95.

This volume is a reprint of chapters previously published by the author in *Middle East Contemporary Survey (MECS)*, published by the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies and the Shiloah Institute of Tel Aviv University in Israel. The chapters reprinted in this volume span the years 1977 to 1985. Chapter nine, first published in 1987, discusses the American, Israeli and Iranian arms deal, better known in the United States as the Iran-Contra Affair. The conclusion was published in 1989.

The principal value of this volume is that it provides the interested scholar with a handy reference book. Rather than having to run to the library to check *MECS* for information, Holmes and Meier publishers have made available in paperback a good factual account and chronology of the Islamic revolution in Iran.

The author proffers no theories of revolution, comparative revolution and/or social change. Neither does he offer a structural analysis of the Iranian revolution such as Said Arjomand, *The Turban and the Crown* (Oxford University Press, 1988); Mohsen Milani, *The Making of the Iranian Revolution* (Westview Press, 1988); Misagh Parsa, *Social Origins of the Iranian Revolution* (Rutgers University Press, 1989) or Hooshang Amirahmadi, *Revolution and Economic Transition:*

The Iranian Experience (State University of New York Press, 1990). Neither is it as readable as Shaul Bakhash, *The Reign of the Ayatollahs* (Basic Books, 1984). Bakhash's book covers the same time span, 1977 to 1983, as the first six chapters of the volume under review.

There are portions of Menashri's chronology, however, that are worth reading and rereading for both specialists and non-specialists of Iranian history and politics. I enjoyed especially reading his account of the *maktabi* and *hujjatiyah* divisions among the *'ulamā'* in 1981-2 (pp. 219-23); a nice scheme of their differing views is provided on page 223. It is important to note the similarities of the *hujjatiyah* attitudes as compared to the pragmatist-centrist policies being pursued currently by the Iranian government under the leadership of President Hashemi Rafsanjani. The pragmatists-centrists' views of the current leadership are given in detail in Hooshang Amirahmadi, *Revolution and Economic Transition*, pp. 118-130. I think that Menashri is one of the first observers of the Iranian revolution to indicate the increasing strength of the *hujjatiyah*, sometimes referred to as moderates and the later pragmatists-centrists, and the increasingly dominant role that they began to play in Iranian politics as early as 1982 under the leadership of Hashemi Rafsanjani. Writing in 1987, and referring to the year 1985, the author stated that "Rafsanjani continues to be the most powerful leader of revolutionary Iran, second only to Khomeini . . ." (p. 382). This became especially evident after Rafsanjani's renomination as prime minister in 1985.

Menashri also proffers what seems to the reviewer to be an astute opinion regarding the so-called radicals and moderates of the arms deal controversy. In his view, the moderates were those in the government and in the parliament who were responsible for the actual administering of the state. Those individuals outside the administration, such as key figures in most of the revolutionary organizations, provided the bulk of the radicals, such as Mehdi Hashemi, the brother of Ayatollah Montazeri's son-in-law, Hadi, who was in charge of coordinating the foreign activities of the government or, at least, the revolution. Another example of the ascendancy of the moderates is the failure of Ayatollah Montazeri, a non-moderate, to obtain the office of *velayat-i faqih* (Supreme Guide), and Khomeini's office before his death. In August 1989 Montazeri lost the position of *velayat-i faqih* to Ali Khameni when Hashemi Rafsanjani was elected president. The ability of the pragmatists-centrists, the former *hujjatiyah*, to prevent a candidate favored by Ayatollah Khomeini from becoming *velayat-i faqih*, the cornerstone of the Islamic revolution and its most ideologizing instrument, is perhaps the best, most fitting and the most striking symbol of the ascendancy to power of the pragmatists-centrists in Iran. David Menashri, to his credit, is one of the first scholars to observe and note this trend.

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The Modern Uzbeks from the Fourteenth Century to the Present: A Cultural History. By Edward A. Allworth. Studies of Nationalities in the USSR Series. Stanford Hoover Institution Press, 1990. xiv plus 410 pp.

This work by one of the leading Western scholars specializing in Central Asia undoubtedly constitutes a major contribution to the field. In it, Professor Allworth has assembled a great deal of information and analyzed it with a skillful critical eye, elucidating important details that otherwise might have gone unnoticed. The subject of the work is the Uzbeks, the most numerous and arguably the most important of the Central Asian Muslim nationalities, owing both to their central location in Central Asia and to their custodianship of the oldest continuing centers of Central Asian Islam, Bukhārā and Samarqand. In covering the period from the fourteenth century to the present, the author has aimed at a comprehensive treatment of the history of the Uzbek nation, and to a large extent succeeded.

Allworth's volume is one in a series on the nationalities in the USSR published by the Hoover Institution at Stanford University. Other volumes that have come out deal with the Georgians, the Estonians, the Kazakhs, the Crimean Tatars, and the Volga Tatars. Since the USSR now is completely

defunct, it appears that the series' conception will have to be revised, but it should be pointed out that this series, to some extent, had anticipated the breakup of the USSR by emphasizing its discrete nationalities as conceptual entities worthy of study, and that studies of such a type had not been undertaken before, at least as separate books. The devotion of a volume to the study of the Uzbeks, a new venture for Western scholarship, therefore is well worth the effort. A comparison of this volume with the others in the series reveals that the authors were given considerable latitude in choosing and organizing the material, but that a cultural rather than a political emphasis is clear. This is especially the case with Allworth's contribution, for as his bibliography shows (p. 376), he has long been a student of modern Central Asian literature, especially among the Uzbeks.

Although billed as a history covering a specific length of time, the treatment is not mainly narrative or chronological, but topical. The work follows a general chronological course from earlier to later times as one progresses through the chapters, but in each chapter some specific topic is discussed and analyzed at length, so that there is room for no narrative historical overview. Thus, chapters 1 and 3 discuss the concept of community or ethnicity, while chapters 2 and 4 speak of sovereign rule and leadership concepts, establishing the background of Central Asian kingship. Chapter 5 continues this trend, analyzing the need of the Central Asian rulers for a legitimating ideology, as represented by praise in court poetry. The *yadid* reformers are talked about in chapters 8 and 9 within the context of education and educational reforms. With the coming of Russian and especially Soviet rule in the later chapters (11-18), the problems of identity are once more discussed, this time in terms of the Russian/Soviet need to divide and rule. Much reference is made to literature. Altogether, the topical treatment essayed here is a bold concept, and one that is difficult to bring off successfully.

Indeed, the lack of narrative content may make the text appear somewhat disjointed to the non-specialist reader. But the interweaving of the political and cultural history perhaps gives a more intimate picture of the life of a civilization than a pure narrative would do. Stable features and long-range developments are dealt with, not merely events. When the author does cite events out of their context, such as the episode of the first Bukhāran contacts with Russia (pp. 90-100), the reader is brought right into the cultural milieu by the wealth of background details provided. One should add that the numerous visuals in the text contribute a welcome immediacy to the text that is often missing from scholarly works.

However, although the overall treatment constitutes a solid and much-needed contribution to scholarship, there are still a number of points to quibble over. Many of these probably owe to the very comprehensiveness of the work. First, there is too much emphasis on obeisance to leaders and on the felt need for strong leadership among the Uzbeks. This emphasis derives from the Central Asian kingly tradition that is much featured in the courtly literature and records that Allworth cites. While this tradition has no doubt been influential, there is also a pietistic countertradition, which brings us to the second point.

Throughout the book, the role of the *ʿulamāʾ* is scanted or treated one-sidedly (e. g., pp. 110, 126, 141-7, 152, 154). The value judgments rendered against the *ʿulamāʾ* make the work ideological, as the introduction shows it is meant to be, when Allworth hopes aloud that his work will influence developments in Central Asia (p. viii). Fitting in with this picture is the author's praise of modernizing reformists; he baldly states that "the Reformists offered the best chance Central Asia might have to retain and improve its Muslim civilization and heterogeneous polities" (p. 120), when in fact there is no evidence and little probability that reformist success might have forestalled the disasters of Russian/Soviet colonization and the Stalin era.

In addition, the role of Qorbashi rebels of 1918-29, often erroneously called "Basmachis" after the derogatory Russian appellation, is dismissed in a few pages (pp. 174-6, 209), probably because of the lack of *yadid* participation in their activities, and their revolt is not followed after 1922. The effect that Stalin's Terror and the continuing repression after it had on the Muslims' minds, making them afraid and unwilling to stand up for their rights receives little mention, and its effect on Islamic religious practice and belief is not plumbed. Overall, Allworth's concentration on elite literature and political elites lessen his work's explanatory value when confronted with the surging Islamic movement that is particularly significant in Uzbekistan today. Muslim religious leaders in early modern times were not medievalist obscurantists with unchanging mentalities, but rather

humans trying to protect the interests of themselves and their communities every bit as much as the *jadid* reformers were.

Aside from this question of interpretation, there are also a few palpable slips. More than once, new terms are introduced in passing without a hint as to their significance. Thus "Chagatay" (p. 68), "Ashtarkhanids" (p. 69), "Mogolistanians" (p. 81), and "ideologists" (p. 118) are unidentified. There are also a few factual or linguistic errors; e.g., *ṣayghāmbār* is identified as "another Arabic term that designated an envoy in the holy books" (p. 80), whereas it actually means "prophet" in Persian. It would be trivial to mention the few other errors of minor significance.

Finally, although Allworth emphasizes the artificiality of the Uzbek nationality, he grants its possible persistence as an identity (p. 329), an expectation which trends in Central Asia seem to be bearing out, as a united Central Asia or Turkistan at the moment seems unlikely to emerge. Thus, his work has only been partially overtaken by events and is likely to remain necessary reading for anyone seeking a deep understanding of the Uzbeks and their culture for some time. For the first time in English, Allworth has presented the reader with a clear overview of Uzbek history and culture, and for that great service his work should be properly lauded.

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Religion, Learning and Science in the 'Abbasid Period. Edited by M.J.L. Young, J.D. Latham and R.B. Serjeant. (The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature.) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990. xxi plus 587 pp. Glossary. Bibliography. Index. Hb, \$105.00.

This is the third volume in the Cambridge History of Arabic Literature. Like the previous volumes, it is written by many hands with all the challenges that such an arrangement can bring. Its twenty-nine chapters are written by twenty-seven scholars, all well-known specialists in their own fields and drawn from centers of learning in the United Kingdom, the United States, Europe and the Arab world. The period of history on which this volume concentrates represents the apogee of Arab Islamic civilization, and its subject of study is the most sophisticated manifestation of Arab Islamic culture in matters of religion, learning, and science. It is, therefore, not without deep regard for the scholarship that went into this volume that I read it, and not without great appreciation for the task achieved in it that I write this review.

Of the three editors, only one has contributed a chapter to the book, namely, M.J.L. Young who, in addition to the Editorial Preface, also wrote on "Arabic Biographical Writing" (Ch. 11), which is an extensive field of literature exceeding in magnitude that of any other ancient or medieval culture. As editor, he must have fully implemented the editorial policy set for the volume. In this chapter, he surveys Arabic biographical dictionaries and works of individual biography, supplements that with a section on Arabic autobiography, and gives insights into the literary characteristics of this kind of literature and into its scholarly use as a source of information. His chapter is provided with brief footnotes and with occasional quotations to enliven and illustrate his argument, and it generally gives one a good account of the state of scholarship in this field.

The other contributors to the volume have followed this editorial policy, more or less, each writing in his field of specialty, some of them skimming on footnotes or quotations to a bare minimum as did the late Fr. Salvador Gomez Nogales in his chapter on "Sunni Theology" (Ch. 1) or Samir Khalil Samir in his chapter on "Christian Arabic Literature in the 'Abbasid Period," (Ch. 26) some others elaborating more fully as did C.E. Bosworth in his chapter on "Administrative Literature" (Ch. 10) or Claude Cahen in his chapter on "History and Historians" (Ch. 12), or Abbas Hamdani in his chapter on "Fāṭimid History and Historians" (Ch. 13), but all of them leaving a fairly reasonable impression of the state of the art in their field.

This editorial policy did not stop certain contributors from using their chapter as an occasion to advance a specific argument they wanted to defend, as though they were writing an article for a scholarly journal, such as Muhsin Mahdi in his chapter on "Philosophical Literature" (Ch. 6) who argued that Arabic philosophic writing, like Arabic poetry and artful prose, used rhetorical reasoning and devices and employed imaginative projections to persuade its readers, so that its aims of persuasion helped to shape its style and manner of exposition, and he illustrated his argument by studying al-Fārābī's and Ibn Ṭufayl's writings. Nor did this editorial policy prevent certain other contributors from going beyond a mere survey of their field and making an effort to fill the gaps in it, as did David A. King in his chapter on "Astronomy" (Ch. 15), a field in which, because of its recently known data, there has been no classification of the literature; so he attempted to give one and to discuss the various categories of Islamic astronomical literature, which he organized around (1) works on mathematical astronomy, (2) works on theoretical astronomy, (3) works on astronomical timekeeping, and (4) works on astronomical instruments. A parallel and equally interesting chapter is that on "Astrology" (Ch. 16) written by David Pingree, who similarly emphasizes the fact that the investigation of this vast literature has barely begun and that numerous manuscripts are still scattered throughout the world's libraries awaiting study.

Other chapters on 'Abbasid science include "Arabic Medical Literature" (Ch. 19) written by Haskell D. Isaacs and two written by Donald R. Hill: "Mathematics and Applied Science" (Ch. 14) and "The Literature of Arabic Alchemy" (Ch. 18). In these chapters, the authors pay attention to scientific theory as well as to scientific practice, and they trace these disciplines to the ancient world and relate them to medieval Europe showing the original contributions of Arab Islamic sciences. The scientific study of the earth in this volume is dealt with in "Geographical and Navigational Literature" (Ch. 17) by J.F.P. Hopkins, who traces its origins to Indian and Greek writings, then expounds on works in Arabic, showing how some of them turned from technical to general cultural concerns to include interests in *adab* and history, even before travel, navigation, and encyclopedic works became known.

Five chapters in this volume deal with Arabic literature on religion and the religious experience. In addition to the chapter on Sunni theology mentioned earlier, there is another on "Shi'ī Theological Literature" (Ch. 2) by I.K.A. Howard and a third one on "Ibādī Theological Literature" (Ch. 3) by J.C. Wilkinson. They are all too short to deal with all the intricacies of Islamic theology, but manage to present basic information on the subject and the main Arabic works on it. Then John Burton surveys the literature of "Qur'ānic Exegesis" (Ch. 4) and traces its growth from early oral reports to later written works, among which he identifies three broad approaches: (1) the linguistic approach based on Tradition, (2) the rational approach colored by a specific theology, and (3) the mystical approach largely dependent on intuition. The literature of Islamic mysticism in general is surveyed by Caesar E. Farah in "The Prose Literature of Sufism" (Ch. 5), where he studies a variety of mystical works, including descriptive works, guidance and reference manuals, biographies and hagiographies, highlighting themes of love, the Logos, and morality and discussing techniques of allegory and narrative art in them. Works on Islamic jurisprudence and legal theory are examined by P.W. Baker and I.D. Edge in a joint study entitled "Islamic Legal Literature" (Ch. 9), in which they follow the development of Arabic writing on Islamic law and discuss the rise of various legal schools and their theories, and then survey miscellaneous practical handbooks on particular branches of Islamic law, works on biographies of jurists and judges, and collections of legal responses (*fatāwā*).

If the Qur'ān is the fountainhead of all these "religious sciences," the study of Arabic, the language in which it has been revealed, is also a religious science. Two chapters in this volume are devoted to 'Abbasid works on Arabic, both written by M. G. Carter: "Arabic Lexicography" (Ch. 7) and "Arabic Grammar" (Ch. 8). In the former, Carter surveys the growth of Arabic lexicons, of the thesaurus type as well as the dictionary type, and he discusses their various methods of arrangement and systems of definition, rightly concluding they are not merely organized repositories of information but "alphabetical lists of the ingredients of an entire civilization." In the latter chapter, he examines the emergence of Arabic grammar as a descriptive and analytical study of the language, outlining the various schools and surveying the theoretical and pedagogical works on the subject and latter-day commentaries on them and summarizations of them, and he finds that insights now known in modern linguistics "have been part of the Arabic grammatical tradition for centuries."

The volume contains separate chapters on six of the greatest intellectuals of the 'Abbasid period: "Al-Kindī" (Ch. 20) by Fritz W. Zimmermann, "Al-Rāzī" (Ch. 21) by Albert Z. Iskandar, "Al-Fārābī" (Ch. 22) by Alfred L. Ivry, "Ibn Sīnā" (Ch. 23) by the late Fr. Salvador Gomez Nogales, "Al-Bīrūnī and the Sciences of His Time" (Ch. 24) by George Saliba, and "Al-Ghazālī" (Ch. 25) by Adīb Nāyif Diyāb. Though mentioned in other chapters of the volume, each thinker is treated here in some detail and an assessment of his contributions is made in relation to the latest scholarly writings on him. The volume also contains a chapter on "The Translation of Greek Materials into Arabic" (Ch. 28) by L.E. Goodman, in which he outlines that great 'Abbasid movement which made classical Greek learning available in Arabic and he discusses some of the major translators and their works as integrated into Islamic culture.

In two chapters of the volume, literary developments have been brought beyond the five centuries of the 'Abbasid period (750-1258 A.D.) and down to the 20th century. They are: "Judeo-Arabic Literature" (Ch. 27) by Paul B. Fenton and "Didactic Verse" (Ch. 29) by Ṣafā' Khulūṣī, the editorial explanation being that their subjects are not planned for further treatment in subsequent volumes of the Cambridge History of Arabic Literature.

Despite the variety of topics treated and of the approaches used by the contributors, this volume succeeds in giving a generally good picture of the intellectual and learned activities of the 'Abbasid period and of the state of scholarship on it today. The editors and the contributors are to be congratulated on a well-done piece of scholarly work. One may argue that additional chapters to the volume could have increased its value, such as a chapter to discuss Arabic works on logic, for example, and another to study Arabic works on ethics. One may ask why, in the series of chapters on individual scholars, there has been no chapter on al-Shāfi'ī, for example or on Ibn Rushd, Ibn al-Haytham, and Ibn 'Arabī, all of whom are great scholars of seminal importance. One may wonder why the bibliography included the basic classics only, often giving old editions, and why it ignored some of the most recent works or articles. But one should understand the power of editorial limitations and the strictures of making choices. As it is, this volume is on the whole a well-balanced presentation of Arabic literature on religion, learning, and science in the 'Abbasid period and is a welcome addition to reference and research tools on this subject.

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The Ismā'īlīs: Their history and doctrines. By Farhad Daftary. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990. xviii plus 804 pp. \$79.50.

The Ismā'īlīs constitute the second largest Shī'ī community in the Muslim world. They are spread throughout the world but are mainly to be found in India, Pakistan, Ceylon, East Africa, Central Asia, Afghanistan, Iran, Syria, Singapore, Yemen, the United Kingdom, America, and Canada. This thick volume, the product of twenty years' research, is a very competent and readable account of their history and doctrines. It is very useful to have available in one single volume a comprehensive history of Ismā'īlism from its origins around the middle of the second/eighth century, with its various branches, until recent times. The book consists of seven chapters. The introduction outlines the progress of Western scholarship in Ismā'īlī studies. It is followed by origins and early development of Shī'ism. The subsequent five chapters deal with early Ismā'īlism, Fātimid Ismā'īlism, Mustafīan Ismā'īlism, Nizārī Ismā'īlism of the Alamūt period, and Post-Alamūt Nizārī Ismā'īlism. All the chapters are well researched and Daftary has synthesized the results of modern scholarship on various aspects of Ismā'īlī history and doctrines, drawing on numerous primary and secondary sources, into a well-knit continuous narration. The author is quite assiduous in matters of documentation, and the end-notes are exhaustive. It would have been more useful to have some additional headings of sections within each chapter.

Despite progress made in Ismā'īlī studies during the past half a century some lacunae remain in our knowledge, especially of their early history and doctrines, and the first few centuries of post-Alamūt period. A bulk of extant Ismā'īlī texts still remain unpublished. Moreover, a considerable number of the published texts are inadequately edited. Monographical studies about major thinkers and their doctrines is yet to be undertaken, hence certain aspects of their history and doctrines will remain debatable. On pp. 30 and 261 the 'Aliyya, or the 'Alawī Bohras should be added to the list of surviving Musta'li-Tayyibī communities in India. Two minor typographical errors were noticed: i, p. 199, line 11 from bottom, read *nagīb*; ii, p. 311, line 10 from top, read *hīl' al-faḍl'īl*. On the whole, however, this book is a very useful contribution to the Ismā'īlī studies and will be of great value both to scholars and layman interested in Ismā'īlī history.

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ISMAIL K. POONAWALA



'Abū Tammām and the Poetics of the 'Abbāsīd Age. By Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych. Studies in Arabic Literature: Supplements to the Journal of Arabic Literature. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1991. xv plus 404 pp. Appendix of Arabic Texts Bibliography. Index. Hb. Gld. 180.00.

Originally a 1981 doctoral dissertation submitted to the University of Chicago, this study is a ground-breaking reevaluation of the Abbāsīd poet Abu Tammām and of the Arabic literary criticism associated with his works. Based on sound scholarship in Arabic literature and on erudition encompassing knowledge of Islamic culture as well as pre-Islamic and ancient Near Eastern civilization, it is a courageous work that sheds new light on our understanding of Abu Tammām's achievements and on the literary dispute over him. Professor S. P. Stetkevych has treated us since 1979 to some of her ideas in several learned articles in English and Arabic on this subject. Her book now, as developed from her dissertation, brings to us a unified and comprehensive view of her work in this field.

The book is divided into three parts. Part One deals with Abu Tammām and the Arabic critical tradition. Part Two consists of a close reading of five of Abu Tammām's major panegyric odes superbly rendered into English, their full Arabic originals with other Arabic quotations used in the book being placed in the Appendix. Part Three offers an analysis of the formal structure of Abu Tammām's anthology, *al-Ḥamāsah*, in relation to that of other works and to his view of the Arabic poetic tradition. In all three parts, Abu Tammām's literary genius is laid bare before us as a poet and an anthologizer whose vision expressed the complex culture of his age in a new style, which some of his contemporary critics totally misunderstood.

The new style was called *badi'* and its beginning was generally attributed to Bashshār ibn Burd (d. 783) or Muslim ibn al-Walīd (d. 823). Highly rhetorical, its most celebrated exponent was Abu Tammām (d. 845 or 846). Arabic literary thought tried to define and analyze it in such works as al-Jāhīz's *al-Bayān wa-l-Tabyīn* and Ibn al-Mu'tazz's *Kitaḥ al-Badi'*; and Abū Tammām's practice of it was studied in such works as al-Sulī's *Akhbār Abi Tammām* and al-Amīdī's *al-Aṣfawāna bayn Shīr' Abi Tammām wa-l-Buḥūrī*. While some of those critics liked it and defended Abu Tammām and others found fault with it and with him, Professor Stetkevych's study of these critics shows that they were bound in a paradox by having established ancient Arabic poetry as a model which could not be equaled by the modern poets; for however innovative the moderns were, they would be considered unpoetical by some, and whenever they imitated the ancients they would be judged unoriginal by others. Although aware of this paradox, the critics were unaware of the historico-cultural context of their critical discussions, according to Professor Stetkevych, this context being the momentous transition of Arab culture from a predominantly oral tradition to a predominantly written one. The function of poetry in the oral tradition of the Jāhiliyyah was to preserve information; hence, the mnemonic use of rhyme, meter, thematic organization, and rhetorical devices with unforgettable effects. With the spread of writing, this function became redundant, prose becoming the literary medium, and so these mnemonic elements of poetry had to be given a different role if poetry itself was not to become redundant. This role had a dual purpose, according to Professor Stetkevych:

(1) ritual, to express cultural identity and continuity, and (2) exegetical, to interpret the oral tradition of the Jāhiliyyah to the urban elites of the 'Abbāsīd age, hence the rise of *badrī* poetry. The theological debates of the times had engendered abstract concepts, and the *badrī* style provided the rhetorical devices to manipulate abstractions in poetry. What Ibn al-Mu'tazz called *al-madhhab al-kalāmī* was not a rhetorical device, as he and others thought, but rather the conceptualizing mentality of the theologians pervading the structure of the "modern" poetry and it was indeed the source of the *badrī* style embedding mental processes of interpretation.

Professor Stetkevych applies this understanding of *badrī* to five long odes by Abu Tammām and shows in detail how he dealt with the traditional images and structural components of the old classical *qasīdah*, manipulating them into a modern form fusing the literary past and the political present. He did not cling to the traditional surface structure of the old poetry but sought deep structure for his odes connecting their motifs and sequences with ancient Near Eastern ritual. He reworked and reinterpreted the old materials into his odes and created new ideas, which often eluded critics. His metaphorical expansions and his structural uses of antithesis, which were basic to his expression of the old Arab tradition, were the way he perceived that tradition and interpreted it to the 'Abbāsīd era.

Abū Tammām followed the same process in the selections he made from the poetic tradition of the Arabs for his anthology, *al-Ḥamāsah*. Consisting of eleven broad categories of poetry, it was conceived as an intricate network of metaphors and antitheses, cohesively structured to make a unified literary statement and not merely to preserve the Arab poetic tradition. The theme dominating one poetic category runs through all the anthology, which thus is made to express the unity of the entire value system of the Arabs and their literary tradition. By intentionally manipulating the chosen poems and fragments in a variety of ways (including on occasion falsification and suppression of authorship, editing and interpolation of texts), Abu Tammām reveals he does not aim to preserve but to regenerate the tradition, which he sees as a system of values and ideas interrelated metaphorically or dialectically. This intertextuality of the Arab poetic tradition, as he sees it, is the same intratextuality he practices in his own poems based on the *badrī* style which regenerated metaphor and antithesis in an innovating way, though it still harked back to ancient Near Eastern myth and ritual by reintegrating into it the sacrificial structure of the classical Arabic *qasīdah*.

Professor Stetkevych believes that in his anthology, no less than in his own poetry, Abu Tammām was offering an 'Abbāsīd vision of the Arab poetic past and expressing the literary taste of his age. He was also putting the political experiences of his times in regenerated classical form, ritually legitimating the caliphal institutions and policies of the 'Abbāsīds by his courtly panegyrics. The misunderstanding which some critics had of his work was due to their limited vision that concentrated on a narrow, literal perception of the literary tradition, basically as a static heritage that was above reproach and beyond imitation or emulation.

Professor Stetkevych's study presents not only Abu Tammām and his critics in a new light, but also the poetic style of *badrī*. She confirms that rhetorical devices are not empty ornament but have a semantic and structural function in poetry as Andras Hamori and M.M. Badawi have already shown, and she goes beyond Stefan Sperl's view of the ritual role of caliphal panegyrics by showing that Abu Tammām's panegyric *qasīdahs* are ritual in terms of function and themes as well as in terms of structure. For in Abu Tammām's panegyric, the caliph stands out as the mythic sacrifice: king who revitalizes his people by devitalizing the enemy.

This book is a very interesting study of the subject and is likely to open new avenues for further research. It is highly recommended to specialists and to students of Arabic literature.

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Images of Paradise in Islamic Art. Sheila S. Blair and Jonathan M. Bloom, Editors. Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH.: Hood Museum of Art, (Distributed by The University of Texas Press) 1991. Illustrations (31 color/115 black-and-white). Index. Bibliography. 120 pp. \$29.95 hb, \$19.95 pb.

This is a very handsome, beautifully formatted, if brief, survey of some of the kinds of Islamic art that deal with the theme of the afterlife. The illustrations are accompanied by a good narrative text written by three scholars of Islam and Islamic art. Kevin Reinhart provides some of the basic themes of the Islamic understanding of life after death, focused especially on the Qur'anic and eschatological writings. He elaborates on the theme of the gardens of paradise, especially in *Hadith* literature and some of the motifs of Sufi writing. In an essay on the meaning of death and afterlife in popular conception and practice, Gene Garthwaite talks about such things as Muslim burial practices and the observance of the *Shr'i ta Siyya* or passion play. Walter Denny traces the themes of paradise as they are illustrated in iconography, architecture, ceremonies, costumes and various works of art representative of Islamic culture, providing vivid and alluring pictures of how the hope of a felicitous time to come has inspired artists in a range of mediums. The book is beautifully illustrated with large color prints and in small black and white reproductions, each with documentation as to artist (if known), date, and historical and thematic context.

The book is designed as a catalog to accompany a traveling exhibition on the theme of "images of paradise in Islamic art" organized by the Hood Museum of Art of Dartmouth College. It is, therefore, limited to the particular pieces that are part of that display, many of which do not appear at first to be specifically representative of an eschatological theme. It is a useful addition to information on Islamic understanding of concepts of the afterlife and the ways in which those concepts have been developed throughout the fabric of Islamic theology, popular piety, and artistic expression. And for those who simply want to be able to look at some lovely forms of Islamic art, it will make an appealing coffee table volume.

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YVONNE YAZBECK HADDAD



Displaying the Orient: Architecture of Islam at Nineteenth-Century World's Fairs. By Zeynep Çelik. (Comparative Studies on Muslim Societies, no. 12) Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992. xv plus 245 pp. 128 Black and white illustrations.

The nineteenth-century world that celebrated industry and technological progress also displayed for fairgoers a microcosm of the entire human experience, with its myriad cultures and peoples. On the great stage of the expositions, cultures imported to European and American cities were exhibited as artifacts, often in buildings that were themselves intended as realistic representations. Once the Paris Universal Exposition of 1867, which gathered architectural pieces from all over the world, had introduced the notion of an imaginary journey, architectural displays became indispensable to every fair.

Zeynep Çelik, of the New Jersey Institute of Technology, known to the architectural historians as the author of important book *The Remaking of Istanbul*, (1986) surveys the representation of Islamic cultures at the world's fairs, focusing on the architecture of the pavilions and their reflection of sociopolitical and cultural trends crucial to our understanding of transformations both in the West and the world of Islam during the height of the colonial era. For example, the site-planning principles of the fairgrounds reveal an order determined by Western powers, and the architectural styles of the pavilions embody not only European preconceptions of Islam but also the struggle of Muslim nations to define a contemporary image.

Examining cross-cultural exchanges within the framework of the universal expositions, the author draws a complex picture of the nineteenth-century-world, where Europe was not the only actor. In the dialogue between Islamic and Western cultures, Islam was a self-conscious and active,

if unequal, participant. The first three chapters cover the Islamic displays at world fairs in Europe and the United States. Chapter I discusses the presence of Muslims at the expositions in the ethnographic displays of indigenous peoples, in the official visits of Muslim rulers and high officials, and in the visits of individuals. Chapter II examines the site plans of the expositions as diagrams of the prevailing power relations and focuses on the groupings of Islamic pavilions. Chapter III surveys the main pavilions of Islamic nations (essentially the Ottoman Empire, Persia, Egypt, Tunisia, and Morocco), analyzing their stylistic qualities in the broader context of the nineteenth-century search for cultural self-definition. Chapter IV and V trace the impact of the architecture of these Islamic pavilions. Chapter IV looks at two Ottoman expositions in Istanbul and the opening of the Suez Canal in Egypt, all influenced by Western expositions. Chapter V relates exposition architecture to Islamic architectural theory and practice and discusses the interpretations of Islamic architecture by leading Western architects. Finally, the Epilogue brings the themes of the book to the present day. Copiously illustrated, rigorously analytical, and backed by sound arguments, this is a highly recommended book.

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OMAR KHALIDI



Islamic Art. By Barbara Brend. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991. 240 p. 105 color and 60 black and white illustrations. Paperback \$24.95; cloth \$39.95.

Students of Islamic art and architecture are desperately in need of a single volume that treats the subject in a balanced manner covering all periods and geographical regions. Previous titles by David Rice, Richard Ettinghausen, and Oleg Grabar have been limited temporally and spatially; Barbara Brend's book may very well be that volume. From the Alhambra in Spain to the Gol Gumbaz in India, from the Dome of the Rock to the ever evolving art of calligraphy, Brend traces the development of classic Islamic art from the seventh through the twentieth century. The term Islam art suggests a unity of style and purpose, and the Muslim world—from Arabia to North Africa to Spain, from Turkey to Central Asia and India—has a shared cultural heritage of extraordinary richness. Yet, it is common tradition that divides into a variety of styles. So Brend narrates the history region by region in eight chapters, illuminating her discussion with superb examples drawn from all areas in which Muslim artisans and craftsmen have excelled—mosque and palace architecture; the art of the book (calligraphy, painting, and bindings); and the decorative arts, including metalwork, carvings, mosaics, pottery, textiles, and carpets. Throughout, the author elucidates formal aesthetic principles, themes, and imagery. And she points to sources and influences in the different periods—for example, the prominence of jade and chinoiserie after the Mongol invasion.

In *Islamic Art*, Brend expertly guides us through the splendors and delicacies of this classic tradition. The book is accurate, condensed, and balanced in geographic and temporal treatment. It is likely to remain a work of reference for years to come. On the downside, the book does not cover Islamic art in Southeast Asia, and barely touches upon developments in the twentieth century. Confining Islamic art only up to the eighteenth or nineteenth century may mean that Western art critics tend to see the non-Western artistic tradition having died with the advent of colonialism. More can be written perhaps on development since the 1950s. For instance there is reference to photography in 19th century Iran, but little else. Both eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are periods of Islam's encounter with Europe and much can be written on this topic, but one scholar could hardly be expected to do justice to this vast subject. All in all the book is well produced and the copious illustrations enhance the value of the book. For the advanced reader there is a succinct bibliography. Any student of art will find the book informative.

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The Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism and the Sheikh Said Rebellion, 1880-1925. By Robert Olson. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989, 1991. Xix plus 229 pp. Appendices, Notes, Bibliography, Index, \$35 (c), \$12.95 (p).

Tapping British intelligence sources on the Kurds, Iraq, and eastern Turkey from 1922 until 1925, Robert Olson unravels many of the Sheikh Said rebellion intricacies in this highly readable study. What was always complicated (the rebellion's religious nature), at least in the eyes of historians looking at nationalism through a narrow European prism, is clarified. Olson discusses how Sheikh Said emerged as a religious and a nationalist leader and how his followers threw in their lot behind him because of both tribal and genuine nationalist loyalties. Perhaps the rebellion would have produced different results if religion was not relied upon as a mobilizing tool, but it also was a lot more than nationalism of the masses. Olson conclusively demonstrates that Kurds were emerging as a separate entity and, consequently, were perceived as a threat to Kemalist Turkey. Said's ardent nationalism was impressively effective in destabilizing the Turkish republic's revolutionary forces, particularly at a time when European powers maintained a calculated distance from Atatürk. In hindsight, there is little doubt that the rebellion affected Kemalist nationalism, as Atatürk used it as an excuse to suppress not only Kurds but also Turkish leftist groups. By late 1925, opposition to Kemalist modernization was clamped down as the *tarikats* (orders), *tekkes* (lodges), *savires* (cells), and *türbes* (religious tombs) were all banned. Religious titles were abolished and wearing of clerical garb prohibited. These dictums were followed in 1926 by the Dress Law that further hindered clerics, and in Kemalist eyes, those opposing the law were accused of rejecting Turkey's emancipation. Of course, all of these laws were passed in an atmosphere of political consciousness as the Turkish public were led to believe "that their implementation and acceptance would reduce the threat of Kurdish nationalism." (p. 159) Considering more recent developments in Kurdistan, Olson's work makes a lasting contribution to our understanding of how Kurdish nationalism was repressed. By now, denying Kurds their national movement must surely be relegated to history's constantly bulging dust-bin. As the world is confronted with a significant re-awakening of Kurdish nationalism in Turkey, Iraq and Iran, Olson's conclusion that the influence of Kurdish nationalism "on the development of modern Turkey has been most underestimated by scholars and students of Turkey," is entirely accurate. (p. 160) Still, it is to be hoped that Soviet, Iranian and, most importantly, Turkish archives, will eventually be made available for more thorough assessments of this seminal development in Middle East affairs.

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JOSEPH A. KECHICHIAN



Turkish Nationalism in the Young Turk Era. By Masam Arai. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992

There is perhaps no better time than this for a book on the emergence of Turkish nationalism at the beginning of this century. There are several reasons for the importance of this timing. First, recent efforts on revitalizing Ottoman historiography include a desensitizing of Turkish nationalistic imprints on much of the existing analysis of the Ottoman background. Obviously, such an effort would first require a critical revision of "nationalism" itself. Oddly enough, not much of the revisioning scholarship has comprehensively dealt with this very source of the emerging criticisms. Arai's book is one of the few that attempts to do so. It is particularly a most welcome study as it points to connections that help bridge the long lost gap between late Ottoman heritage and republican Turkish history.

The second reason is a twofold one: The collapse of the Soviet and East European systems has awakened struggles for nation-states. The emerging Turkic nation states in the former Soviet Union are part of this change. As new Turkic nationalisms develop, the study of the original nationalisms within the Ottoman context will be most interesting for considering continuity and change processes in a time span of one hundred years. Such consideration would not only involve

re-analyzing Turkish nationalism as a historical process, but also would enable us to ponder the connections being forged between Turkey and the new Turkic republics in the name of Turkism.

For these reasons, Arai's book is not only of interest to the particular specialist, but to anybody who is rethinking "nationalism."

Arai sets out to clarify what nationalism truly entailed in the 1910s by looking at the four leading nationalist periodicals of the time. He begins by emphasizing the need to grasp the complexity of many a nationalist ideology. He postulates that "the easy conversion of Ottoman intellectuals to Turkish nationalism has not really been clarified." (p. 4) Arai also stresses the importance of studying "the difference between the thoughts of two groups who cooperated in diffusing the nationalist ideas i.e. the Ottoman Turks and immigrants from Russia." (p. 4) The former ideology attempted to do the following: 1) to strengthen a pseudo-nation-state from among different national groups, and 2) to create a national Turkish identity among Ottoman Turks, as well as reinforcing the social unity between various Turkic groups outside the Empire.

The first nationalist organ studied by Arai served as a joint body of Turks both inside and outside the empire. Established in Istanbul in 1908 by Yusuf Akcura, an immigrant Turk from Russia, Turk Dernegi (Turkish Association), brought together the leading intellectuals of the day including well known Turcologues and a few Turks from Russia. Branches were opened in Russian territory. Its journal, also called *Türk Dernegi*, presented an infinite variety of ideas. Arai classifies the articles published in this journal according to topic, including the present situation in the Ottoman country, related past events, and Central Asia, the historical background of this area. As Arai puts it, "the articles reflected, on the whole, the ideas of Ottoman nationalists, whose urgent task was to awaken Turkish national identity, which among Ottoman Turks had been lost for a long time." (p. 20) The forgotten glories of Turks were to be remembered in order to appreciate what Turkism was. Turkism, in turn, was seen as a first step for Turks and the Ottoman empire to meet the threat of absorption by the West. The author also presents us with a table which lists the articles according to content. Though quite useful for researchers, his analysis does not provide any theoretical basis. Furthermore, he uses terms such as Turkism, Ottoman nationalism, and nationalism interchangeably. Indeed, one cannot tell where this confusing overlap stems from. Arai himself seems to have been aware of a need to clarification when he says, "there seems to have been no common purpose in these studies." The promotion of Turcological studies, and the unity of the Ottoman nation were the major concerns of Turks at the time. However, the founder Yusuf Akcura seems to have aimed at other concerns through similar means. For him, Arai argues, the nationalist idea was to be promoted in the Ottoman empire in order to liberate Muslim-Turkic peoples from czarist rule. Quite clearly, nationalism meant many different things to many different intellectuals. The need to clarify what kind of nationalism any particular periodical or organ aspired to become more important in light of this seeming differentiation. One does not understand if, and, how, these differentiated ideas fitted what nationalist thought. Arai does not offer any clear definition of nationalism at any point of the book.

Analytical problems keep rising throughout Arai's work. In his discussion of the second periodical *Genc Kalemler* (Young Pens), published in Selanik after the 1908 revolution as a continuation of another periodical, he provides more information on the founders, and the ideologies of the periodical. Ali Canip, Omer Seyfettin and Ziya Gokalp seem to have worked closely in campaigning for the simplification and purification of Ottoman Turkish through *Genc Kalemler*. Arai also mentions the close link between the editorial board of the periodical with the *Ittihat ve Terakki*, Committee of Union and Progress (hereafter CUP). His assertion is that the editors used this connection to promote their ideas for Turkish in the schools of the empire whereas the CUP wanted to use the periodical in inventing a new language in order to reach common people. Even if we are to accept the idea that this link existed, it is untrue that the CUP was mainly concerned about the common people. Arai indeed devalues his own work with such superficial arguments as,

...the CUP leaders were not the traditional ruling elite, but belonged to the so-called new middle class. They knew that they did not have sufficient ability to administer the Ottoman state, nor would they be accepted as the rulers. Consequently, if they could show that their policy represented the general political will of the common people, it

would be a fairly effective measure for asserting the legitimacy of their policies and their political leadership. (p. 47)

In both the *Türk Dernegi* and *Genc Kalemler*, as Arai argues, the immigrants could not diffuse their ideas. Another association and its publication, both named *Türk Yurdu* (Turkish Land), was to provide the platform for those like Akcura to advocate the unity of Turks alongside Ottomanism. Compared to the two preceding periodicals, *Türk Yurdu* since its birth in 1911, stressed collecting and diffusing information on Turks residing in various regions. Yet, such periodicals as *Türk Yurdu*, *Osmanlilik* (Ottomanism) promoted the argument that "Turks could derive the greatest profit from the progress of Osmanlilik." (p. 60) These years seem to have witnessed a lot of discussion between various nationalists in terms of the interchangeability of Ottomanism, Turkism, and what Turkism consisted of and the position of these ideologies vis-à-vis Islam among personalities such as Gokalp, Kopruolu and Agaoglu. Undoubtedly these were crucial points. Yet once again, Arai fails to provide any convincing analysis of the above factors.

Chapter Five discusses an entirely different type of association, namely *Türk Ocagi* (Turkish Hearth). Established by the Medical School students, supported by the CUP and joined by the Civil Service School (*Mekteb-i Mulkiye*) students, this was from the beginning a different effort toward achieving national and social reform by the mere fact that the initiative was taken by the students. Arai explores the association only insofar as it is connected to the *Türk Yurdu* and its founder Akcura. It seems the student organization was influenced by the main thinkers of the Ottoman Empire at the time. Arai argues: "... Akcura essentially wanted to make *Türk Ocagi* a window on Central Asia, a center of the interchange between Turks inside and outside the Ottoman State ." (p. 82)

To conclude, the chapters are isolated from one another, although they are representing the major ideological currents of the period under discussion. Contrary to the received wisdom, Turkish nationalists did not necessarily pursue secularization or Westernization, they were rather in favor of Islamization and modernization. They searched for a means to regain the original truth of Islam, and a way of modernization other than westernization. (p. 97) The claim that Turkish nationalists did not pursue secularization instead of Islam is an important one; to argue that Islamization was favored along with modernization is inviting a whole new platform of discussion on this era.

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MELTEM TOKSOZ



Islam and the Economic Challenge. By Muhammad Umer Chapra. Leicester, United Kingdom. The Islamic Foundation and the International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1992/1412 H. 428 pp. Glossary. Bibliography. Index. GBP 9.50 p/b, 15 50 h/b.

The study is a remarkable result of the effort of a resourceful scholar aimed at producing comprehensive analysis of contemporary economic systems and promoting Islamic solutions to economic problems. The emphasis is on the macroeconomic side of the problem, especially with regard to welfare, full employment, development, equity and imbalances. However, the volume is diverse enough to bring to the attention of the reader an extremely wide and suggestive scope of economic controversies. This free, concise and lucid discourse is set against an overall framework of the ethical problems of modern mankind. In a way, the work is the condensed product of the author's previous contributions to the field, while offering in the same time further elaboration in a sophisticated and contrasted manner.

Chapra goes a step beyond the axiomatic approach in Islamic economics and explains the viability of an Islamic economic system in the context of powerful and convincing discussion. Given the all-inclusive dimensions of such a task, the book is remarkably balanced and avoids most of the drawbacks and repetitions which dilute the interpretation of the problem in other studies in the field. Chapra discusses substantial issues without reduction, even though the reader does not have to be proficient in Islam to follow the discussion. In my opinion, this makes the volume one of the best summaries of Islamic economics, all the more so because of its contributions. Its value is

further enhanced by the fact that the author has been able to analyze in the context of his task some of the most important recent trends and events that have changed and are still changing the conceptual and the practical economic setting, both in the West and in the former communist countries in East Europe.

The configuration of the book provides a two-part structure, undertaking in the first four chapters a discourse on the unsuccessful systems, i.e. capitalism and socialism. The rest of the volume is devoted to conceptual positivist analysis of the Islamic response. It may however be argued that this outlay is not entirely alien to the more traditional three-tier structure chosen by many Islamic economists for their discussion of contemporary economic theories. The first chapter of the book deals with the limits of capitalism, the second one exposes the retreat of socialism, and chapters 5-11 offer the Islamic solution. The deviation from the traditional structuring is more evident in the third and the fourth chapters, dealing with the crisis of the welfare state and the inconsistency of development economics respectively.

Inevitably, this structural approach leads to some generalization. The trap is to regard capitalism or socialism as ultimately homogeneous systems, reducible to a certain overall model of "capitalist" or "communist" economies, and to disregard their actual variety and diversity. To Chapra's credit, he successfully avoids the shortcomings of a generalized preconceptual structuring of the discourse. He analyzes the pragmatic versions of existing economic systems and stresses the major topics of equity, imbalance, employment, development, nationalization, and, at the bottom line, ethics.

The second part of the volume puts forward the basic principles of a non-secular strategy as a prerequisite to attain harmony and overall human well-being. Chapra argues that we should be aware of the fallacies and the shortcomings of a basically Enlightenment-related secularist world-view. It is in fact regarded as the utmost reason for the emergence of both capitalism and socialism. The discussion is further pivoted around the familiar principles of *tawhid* (divine unity), *khilafa* (viceregency) and *adala* (justice). The author discusses the Islamic economic doctrine, i.e. *zakat*, inheritance, and interest-free borrowing. The argument is essentially humanistic, and this trait of the entire study deserves due respect and admiration. The author gives an in-depth perspective of the motivating powers that could restructure and ultimately change socio-economic realities for the better. It is precisely this aspect of his research that constitutes an important contribution to Islamic economics, by bringing it much closer to practical approaches than ever before. It is a powerful philosophical and yet very realistic approach to the critique of existing economic systems, combined with constructive, non-secular and humanistic argument in favor of the Islamic response to the economic malaise.

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BOYKO NITZOV



Palestinian Universities Under Occupation. By Anthony Thrall Sullivan. Special Issue of Cairo Papers in Social Science, 11(2), Summer 1988. Cairo: AUC Press, 1988. 133 pp.

This is a highly recommended study of four Palestinian universities, which were closed down for a number of years by the Israeli military authorities since the beginning of the Uprising in December 1987: Birzeit University, al-Najah University, Bethlehem University, and Gaza Islamic University. The main goal of the monograph is to prove that Palestinian higher education, in spite of the daily political harassment and financial difficulties, is legitimate and serious. And that any research effort in these academic institutions must tackle the main concerns and problems of Palestinian society.

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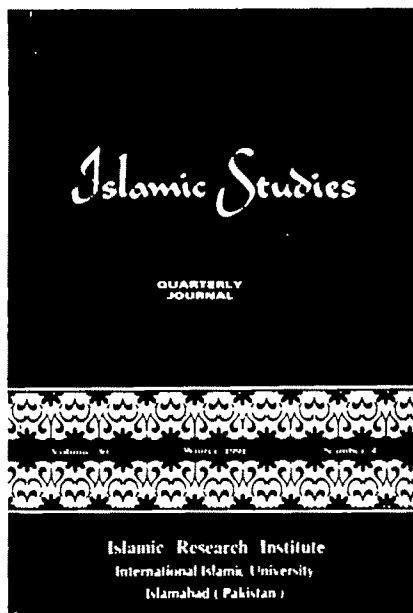
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